

# **JAPANESE-AMERICANS: GENERATIONS IN NEVADA**

Interviewees: Fred Aoyama, Mary Date, Buddy Fujii, Henry Hattori,  
Roy Nishiguchi, George Oshima, and Ida Fukui Weiss

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## **Description**

Seven chroniclers share their recollections as children of Japanese immigrants to the United States. They explore why their parents left Japan, their experiences during World War II, what it was like growing up as Japanese-Americans in Nevada, the cultural differences between their parents' generation and their own. The interviews were done by Noriko Kunitomi, an anthropology student from Japan at the University of Nevada, Reno in 1992. Although her interviews are neither deep nor broad, they are important; without them we would have no oral history record of the experiences of Japanese-Americans in Nevada.



**JAPANESE-AMERICANS  
GENERATIONS IN NEVADA**

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# **JAPANESE-AMERICANS GENERATIONS IN NEVADA**

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS WITH FRED AOYAMA,  
MARY DATE, BUDDY FUJII, HENRY HATTORI,  
ROY NISHIGUCHI, GEORGE OSHIMA AND IDA FUKUI WEISS**

An Oral History Conducted by Noriko Kunitomi  
Edited by Kathleen M. Coles and Susan Imswiler

University of Nevada Oral History Program

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## PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber  
Director, UNOHP  
July 2012

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## ORIGINAL PREFACE

Since 1965 the University of Nevada Oral History Program has been collecting an eyewitness account of Nevada's remembered past. Following the precedent established by Allan Nevins at Columbia University in 1948 (and perpetuated since by academic programs such as ours throughout the English-speaking world) these manuscripts are called oral histories. Some confusion surrounds the meaning of the term. To the extent that these "oral" histories can be read, they are not oral, and while they are useful historical sources, they are not themselves history. Still, custom is a powerful force; historical and cultural records that originate in tape-recorded interviews are almost uniformly labeled "oral histories," and our program follows that usage.

Oral histories conducted by UNOHP are meant as firsthand accounts that serve the function of primary source documents, as valuable in the process of historiography as the written records with which historians customarily work. However, while the properly conducted oral history is a reliable source, verifying the accuracy of all of the

statements made in the course of an interview would require more time and money than the UNOHP's operating budget permits.

As with all such efforts, while we can vouch that this work is an authentic expression of the chroniclers' remembered past, the UNOHP does not claim that the work is free of error. It should be approached with the same caution that the prudent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information.

Each finished manuscript is the product of a collaboration—its structure influenced by the directed questioning of an informed, well-prepared interviewer, and its articulation refined through editing. In producing a manuscript, it is the practice of the UNOHP to employ the language of the chronicler, but to edit for clarity and readability. By shifting text when necessary, by polishing syntax, and by deleting or subsuming the questions of the interviewer, a first-person narrative with chronological and topical order is created. While there is no standard chronicler profile

nor rigid approach to interviewing, each oral history plumbs human memory to gain a better understanding of the past.

Noriko Kunitomi was a University of Nevada student from Japan, who was working on a degree in anthropology in 1992 and has since returned to Japan. Ms. Kunitomi did an independent study exercise with Oral History Director, Tom King, to collect information on the experiences of Japanese-Americans whose parents had immigrated to the United States before World War II. Prior to her work, we had nothing from Japanese-Americans in our collection, even though we had made several attempts. Even Noriko Kunitomi experienced difficulty in getting her chroniclers to participate. Although her interviews are neither deep nor broad, they are important; without them we would have no oral history record of the experiences of Japanese-Americans in Nevada.

The tape recordings from which this manuscript is derived are in the archives of the University of Nevada Oral History Program where they can be heard by appointment.

UNOHP  
October 2000

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FRED AOYAMA

*Noriko Kunitomi: Today is October 14, 1992. I'm interviewing Mr. Fred Aoyama today at his house in Reno, Nevada. The interview will be about the ancestors in his family, decision-making, and life stories related to his family and himself. Does the University of Nevada Oral History Program have your permission to make available to the public the tapes and transcripts from this interview?*

Fred Aoyama: Yes.

*Could you tell me where your family, your father and your mother, come from in Japan?*

My father came from Hiroshima, Canton; I don't know what city or town.

*That's fine.*

My mother came from Kyoto, but, see, we heard these stories when we were real small, and that's about all I can remember.

*But do you know, did they get married in Japan?*

Oh, yes.

*And do you know when they came to the United States?*

Well, probably, ten or fifteen years before I was born. [laughter]

*Could you tell me when you were born?*

June 6, 1910. So it was close to then; I am just guessing; I don't know when they came, because I never asked them.

*Have you heard about reasons why your parents came to the United States?*

Well, because in those days, the United States was considered the wealthiest country to come and work in. You can make money and go back to Japan after you have made your fortune. Of course, I think many of those people with those good intentions came here, but couldn't go back, so they remained here. Very few made enough to go back to their

home towns to help their relatives over there, I'm sure.

*So your parents came here to be farmers, or what kind of business did they pursue?*

Well, living in San Francisco, they didn't look for farming, because they came without capital to buy a farm. Besides, I don't think they could buy land. See they had the alien land law, I think, where, unless you are a citizen, you can't buy ground. So some of those farmers just rented the grounds, so they made less money if they did that.

*How did your parents make a living?*

Well, they worked. My mother had children to raise, so she stayed home, and my father worked at various jobs. I really don't know what he did, but I am sure they were mediocre jobs, because he had no skills, and he came from an average, middle class family, but he heard about the wealth in this country, so he wanted to make money. However, they had no idea what you have to do in this country to make money. So I am sure that he didn't have the kind of work that would earn big wages. He supported us, but just enough to live.

*So you did not have to help your parents?*

Well, when I was twelve years old I went to work, because they had no child labor laws. I went to Chinatown, and they paid me some small wage. I've even forgotten how much I made, but I was one of the youngest people to work in Chinatown. I learned to sell Oriental art goods.

*So did you learn how to speak Chinese?*

No. This was a Japanese store.

*Oh, in Chinatown?*

Yes. The reason for that was, the Chinatown in San Francisco was the largest in the whole world, they tell me. All the tourists go to San Francisco Chinatown to buy Oriental goods. So the Japanese people, whenever there was a vacancy in Chinatown, rented that building and started their business. There were at least five or six Japanese stores in the whole Chinatown. But I know that, at one time, Japanese and Chinese hated each other.

*When you were living in California, growing up in San Francisco and Los Angeles, did you feel any discrimination or segregation?*

Not that much, because, see, we didn't know what the word discrimination or prejudice meant when we were kids going to grammar school. Our parents didn't understand, because they didn't understand English in the first place. That's another reason they couldn't get a good job, because if they could speak English they could find out why they couldn't get a better job. So I think our being ignorant was a blessing, because we never saw this discrimination going on around us. See, California people disliked the Japanese, the Chinese, the Filipinos, any Orientals. Then they always hated the newcomers the worst, and the Japanese were the last to come to this country among the Orientals, as far as I knew.

*You told me in previous questions that when you looked for a job in Los Angeles you couldn't get one from a Caucasian's company?*

Well, no. I didn't. When I went to Los Angeles, my older brother was there to talk to his friends about a job for me, and so I didn't have to go looking for a job, but the reason I

wanted to go was that I knew that the pay scale was better in Los Angeles than it was in San Francisco. That's the reason I went. I worked various jobs in San Francisco, but could never learn enough about business to know exactly what brought better pay. So I was fortunate to be able to find a job through my brother and go into the bingo business.

*When you became more familiar with English later on, did you notice prejudice in the city, and also in Nevada when you came over to Nevada?*

No, that's strange. Nevada was very wide open. Instead of people saying, "Hello, how are you?", like they do other places, they say, "Let's go have a drink." [laughter] That was the greeting when I first came here, and I was amazed that people could even afford to buy drinks like they did in Nevada, because in California we couldn't afford a highball at fifty cents a drink in those days. Well, you see, I was earning enough money, which I sent to my family in San Francisco and kept a small portion for myself, so therefore, I didn't have any extra spending money; just enough to live, because what I spent was the bulk of what I made, but not enough for the family support. So even my younger brother had to work to subsidize the family. How we got along in those days, I really don't understand, because today they make in one hour what I used to make in one day.

*It sounds tough. Were you the only person among your family who lived in Nevada?*

Oh, yes, because, you see, the Japanese felt safety and were more comfortable living with other Japanese. They didn't have to learn the English language; they could speak, purchase groceries, clothes; they had everything in the

Japanese section. I think that was a bad thing, because had they learned to speak English, things would have been much better. Some learned English, but they were very few, the minority.

*Your English is great right now, and I wonder if you spoke English when you were young?*

Oh, yes. See, our whole family spoke English to help the children in our family do their studying, because they spoke English in schools. Their friends outside spoke English, and that's the only way you communicated with people. We understood the Japanese that our parents used. When they told us what to do, we obeyed, but we never spoke back to them in Japanese. My mother sent us to Japanese school for a short while, but gave that up, because we used to go off and play hookey. We never went to Japanese school, because we had to finish the American school at three o'clock and then turn around—at three thirty, the Japanese school starts. I think, maybe, they had it for an hour or so. I tried it, but then all my friends weren't around any more; they went home for dinner. So, instead of going to Japanese school . . . My mother wanted to pay them, but that was her decision, not mine. So we didn't go to school, and she found out about it, and so she thought it was useless, so she didn't send us any more. It was really fairly close to school there, too.

*So, your parents could understand you children speaking English?*

Well, I guess they could tell by the way we said something or pointed to something. We had a very difficult time when the teacher gave us homework, because we would bring the problems home, because these are things that you are supposed to work out at home, and



your parents are supposed to help you a little bit. The only way I got my homework done was to go to my friend's house and discuss it with my friend and put the answers down, because my parents couldn't understand the questions. You know, that's the way it was. So we had very poor communications between the parents and the children, and yet, I am surprised that when you look at the Japanese families, they are very loyal to their families. They think about their parents, their brothers and sisters, and family, so what causes this is something that I only am guessing at why. Maybe we were taught, and we learned subconsciously, I don't know.

*Could you describe what kind of houses or rooms you lived in?*

In San Francisco only wealthy people rented houses. They have flats; usually the houses in the Japanese section have three floors of flats, and you have enough bedrooms and a living room and kitchen on that floor. You know, it's a long building. You go into the living room to the bedrooms and the hallways; maybe a bedroom on the other side of the house. I think that was about a three bedroom. We didn't rent a flat. That was a house and, oh, I know the reason for that. That was my grandmother and grandfather's house. They came before us. I think my father came, because they asked for him to come. They had this house rented, but since he couldn't get a good job enough to rent a house, we lived with them, and whatever we earned, they paid part of the rent for the house to make it easier for the grandparents to pay the rent. Yes, because I remember now, this was a first floor. We called it the basement, which all San Francisco houses had, a garage and storage area. Second floor was living and bathroom. Our place was a basement,

but we couldn't afford a car, so we never had a car. There was a garage in the back which we rented out. The Caucasian man next door used to rent the garage. There was a laundry next door that had trucks, and they put them in the garages, so they subsidized the rent by renting those three garages we had. They used to drive alongside of the house. I remember those things. That's many years ago.

*So it was a house. Did you share rooms?*

With the brothers. Well, there were enough rooms. This is very interesting to me, because in the 1960 Olympics, you see, the mayor of Reno was my friend, and he said to me, "You work too hard, so let's take a day off, and I'll take you to the Olympics in Squaw Valley up here." It was held up at Lake Tahoe, and we went there and watched the opening ceremonies. Vice President Nixon was there to open the games, and it was snowing, oh, just madly snowing.

I said, "I don't want to go."

The most amazing thing happened. We turned off the road and went into Squaw Valley. Oh, the mayor's name was Bud Baker, by the way. And so, since he's the mayor of Reno, they can't say, "You can't park here; you can't park there."

So he just went right up in there and parked, and we got a good parking space, so we could sit in the car and listen, because the snow was coming down cats and dogs. But prior to that, we looked towards Squaw Valley, and I said, "There's a hole in the sky, and it looks like there's sunshine over there. Do you think that's right over Squaw Valley?"

He said, "Well, when we get there, we'll see, won't we?" Well, sure enough, when we parked there was no snow for Vice President Nixon, who was out trying to get started for a speech. It didn't snow the whole time he



talked and made introductions and such as that and congratulated these people. You know how they do. And when he finished, the sky closed up, and the snow came down again. [laughter] I couldn't figure what happened.

*That's interesting.*

Yes. I looked in the newspapers for a comment on that, but they never seemed to have noticed that that's what happened. I don't know why. I guess maybe they didn't have any reporters up there, because they figured nothing was going to happen today, because it's snowing, and they might have been in the main part of the place to record his speech if he had had to go inside, but he spoke outside in the open air in a real round spot like this. Nixon was here, and it didn't snow on us.

*That is amazing.*

Well, then we started walking around after that, and we knew somebody named Lardner from Los Angeles. A very wealthy produce merchant had rented a house for them, a big house in the Olympic Village, they called it. It was just outside the gaming area, and they said that that's a good place to go visit, if you want to meet some of the Japanese athletes from Japan. So Bud said, "Let's go and meet them." We went over there, and that place had whiskey like you couldn't believe. He stocked the place with food and liquor like a regular hotel bar.

We got acquainted with Mr. Sakato of the Sakato Pearl Company from Tokyo, and he said he was happy to meet some people from Reno, so that he could come in. I think he paid quite a bit of the expenses there to bring those athletes, the skiers and the skaters and whatever, because I still have a souvenir that he gave me. [I think I will give you one of

those, because it's a silver pair of skis with two pearls on it, and for a souvenir of your visit I think I'll make you a present of that. How's that?] We met a few times, and he said to me after he came into town, "Oh", he said, "The American food is excellent, but the Japanese athletes miss their Japanese food, and they can't even make tea, because they don't know how to ask the people, and I don't either."

So I said, "Well, I have an electric plug-in hot water maker, so would you like to take that with you? And if you have the tea, our tea isn't as good as what you have, so maybe you can make tea for yourself." He thought that was like a treasure, because it was a cheap little thing, but it made this much hot water. [laughter]

He never forgot me for that. I think that's what led him to—he brought some athletes to town and visited our house, and he said, "I want to invite you to the 1964 Olympic Games in Japan." He said, "You'll be my guest."

So I looked at him, and I thanked him, but I thought to myself, how can I go to Japan and say, "Here I am, Mr. Sakato"? [laughter] I could barely afford the fare, and so I didn't go. I'm sorry I didn't, because now I think he's passed away and gone, but I just couldn't bring myself to accept his hospitality.

I will tell you another story about a friend of mine who I sent over years and years later. He got such a royal treatment that he said, "You should have gone." [laughter] OK, you want to ask some questions? That was an interruption to your question.

*Yes. You told me that your grandparents were in the United States before your family came over.*

Right, but I don't know when they came.

*Did they live with you in the house?*

Oh, yes.

*Do you remember how different they lived from the way your family lived?*

Pretty much the same, because, see, I think that Japanese foods as a whole were much more reasonable than American foods, and, of course, being born in America, we liked certain American foods. So they would serve breakfast, like coffee and bacon and eggs, or something like that, mush, milk; but usually for lunch we took a sandwich, and dinner we ate Japanese food. That's about the way they lived.

*What kind of clothing did they wear?*

Oh, they wore American style clothing, because you can't have long sleeves or puffy sleeves to work. He was a carpenter, by the way. He had a sign on the front, and he used to build things for people and sharpen saws. He was very good at that—saws and the Japanese planes. They are made out of wood, and you pull them toward you. The American planes you push away. The saws were pulled back, too, but finally, I noticed that some of the true craftsmen of this country are using the pull saws of Japan. They say it cuts finer edges than the American fine tooth saws. I guess it does, because where my son lives in Alameda he took me to a place that sells all sorts of saws and tools made in Japan. This is owned by a Caucasian man, but he sells them because there is much demand for them. See, even the Japanese in this country, who are born here, don't even think about those kinds of tools, because they're not used to it. They are used to the American way: the push saw, the push plane, and even the electric saw; but this man sold very fine tools there, and he says there's a call for them. It's true, and he had a whole stock of tools, and he says he has a steady clientele of people who buy those tools. I guess

the market is limited to these hobbyists and neo-craftsmen who can do fine work. They are expensive, too.

*What about grandmother? Did she do some work?*

Well, I think she did some sewing in the house, or something. Anyway, they didn't live very long after we moved in with them, because they were in their early eighties, I think, or late seventies, and they passed away. So we didn't know them for any long period of time, and we didn't get acquainted, but we knew who they were.

*Did you have more cousins here?*

Strangely, no. Aoyama is not a common name, but there are some. In fact, I saw one in the Reno tax rolls here a few years back, but it's gone. They came here for a short while and left. But I see it in the Japanese-American Citizen League paper, the *Pacific Citizen*. You see those?

*No, I haven't seen those papers.*

Well, in there I've seen Aoyama, but they are not related to us, because I've talked to one or two of them, and they have some who live in Los Angeles, but never lived in San Francisco, or they may have come from Japan later, I don't know, but there are not very many Aoyamas.

*Could you tell me why and how you ended up living here in Reno?*

Well, as I said, Earl Warren, the Attorney General of California, was always closing up places in California when he discovered that gambling was going on, which I am sure all

police departments knew about beforehand, and I'm sure that Warren did, too, because he was not stupid, but it was so irregular. The longest period I remember working without interruption was a year, because after one year they want another contribution. So we'd be out of work for a month, at least, and then go back to work. So the general manager of that corporation, or whatever it was that hired us, decided he wanted his own business, too, and away from California, where gambling was a steadier, routine business. So he asked me if I would like to go to Kansas City, Missouri, with him, and since all of us were out of work, anyway, because they closed up the places, we said, "Sure," and we took two other friends of ours and drove all the way from Ocean Park to Kansas City, Missouri.

Two of us rented an apartment in one apartment building, and the others went to another apartment. We opened the place, because Mr. Yamagashi was already there. Oh, air conditioning was a thing that they needed badly, and they hadn't thought about refrigerated air conditioning at that time, because this is 1933. So they recommended that he build a big enclosure. I'd say it was about this big square, and they had an opening to the outside where they could drop ice blocks. There were three-hundred-pound blocks, you know, big ones. They filled it with ice and blew the fan over it into the room, and that would cool it. [laughs] Well, it wasn't like refrigerated air conditioning, but it served the purpose, and it was quite comfortable inside there. They had to buy enough ice so that it would last until the evening session. We got so we knew how much to order for the next day.

Well, after about three weeks to a month of operation, we decided that business was improving, and there was a future there, because the people liked us, and nobody came

to bother us. So Mr. Yamagashi said, "You boys take a vacation and go to the Century of Progress in Chicago, because you can't help the carpenters here; they're all union, and they don't want you to pick up nails and stuff, so you just go and enjoy yourselves in Chicago."

So we had the first opportunity to go to the Mississippi River. I could never believe how big the Mississippi River was, because you couldn't see the other side, from one side to the other. They said it was a mile across, but I think it's the curvature of the earth or something that keeps you from seeing all the way across to the other bank. Now, you could see the buildings over there, but you couldn't really see the bank, because where we crossed it was about a mile wide. We got to the city of Chicago and wandered around quite a bit looking the sights over, but we decided we had better get a place to rest up and have a place to sleep for the night, and we checked many hotels and motels, but they were all full. You go to a world fair like that, and you go to a place where it's jammed with tourists from just all over the Midwest, because Chicago is centrally located.

So one boy had a good idea. He said, "Let's try the YMCA."

So we said we had better find it, and we did, and we met the director, and he said, "I don't have any more rooms for you, but if you are willing to sleep on cots, I'll put them in the hallway for you, and I won't charge you the regular rates. So you can sleep on the cot for two dollars a night."

We thought that was very reasonable, so we made the agreement that we would stay there for the duration. One of the amusing things was the high price of food in the Century of Progress. I read a story in the paper written by some news reporter, and he said he had lettuce, and when he opened the sandwich up to see how much ham he got,

it was sliced so thin the wind blew it away. [laughter] And they charged like a dollar and a half for that kind of sandwich! In those days bread and things were cheaper.

Oh, Sally Rand was very famous. She was one of what they call striptasers now; she used a great, big, old fan, and she kind of moved around and moved just in time to keep the fan between the audience and her body. So she charged a fat price, too, but we couldn't afford it. We asked the people what it was like, and they said, "You're smart not to go in there, because you get charged five dollars admission, and you don't see anything." [laughter] They said, "She waves—and she isn't even a very good dancer." [laughter] So we were glad we didn't go to that.

Then we saw the Japan Pavilion, because we'd never been to a fair. Of course, we went later, and we saw the San Francisco Fair and the Japan Pavilion there, too. But we ran into many girls from San Francisco, because they got a job in that Pavilion, and they were serving tea, so we spent a little bit of time drinking their tea, but the powdered tea they served didn't make very good iced tea. I don't think they use that even in Japan, anymore. It was a horrible looking thing. It's a green color that is very artificial looking, and it didn't taste good at all, [laughter] but the tea cakes were OK.

Anyway, so we looked around there and spent probably three days there, and we left for home, because we were out of money. We thought we had some money. I had eighty dollars, but it was totally gone—just enough for gasoline to get back, because we all shared. The four of us had gone up there.

When we got back we noticed this person sitting there watching the game. So I went up to speak to him and asked him to play, so that we could teach him, and he said, "This is a free country, and I'm going to sit here and watch, if I please. So leave me alone!"

Well, much to our amazement, this man was taking notes on the operation of the game and counting the customers and how much money we could possibly be making. Within three or four weeks we found out the results, because they came to the boss, Mr. Yamagashi, and they gave him an ultimatum—to sell out or face the consequences—which meant lead or cement shoes installed and being dumped somewhere where nobody knew where. [laughter]

So he was intelligent enough to see that. We went to many attorneys, police departments, sheriffs departments. They didn't have an FBI. So we had nobody in government to appeal to. These gangster people did pretty much as they pleased. In fact, they took over the bank account of the money we had in the bank close to the corner there. We had a checking account to pay the bills of five thousand dollars, which we went to claim, and the banker said, "Your proprietor sold the business to these people for the sum of one dollar, so the bank account also belongs to them." I looked at the man and wondered how stupid he could be, but I could see the fear in his eyes, because if he didn't do what they said, why, he would be in the same position we were. So they took the money, and we were out of a job.

Well, they wanted us to work for them, but I couldn't see working for people who just took over the place by sheer force of power, and we couldn't leave our boss Mr. Yamagashi in the lurch to make money for these very same people who stole the place from him. So we made an excuse that we had a stomachache, and we couldn't show up for work that night. They said we were fired, because we didn't show up in time for work. So we were very happy to hear this answer, and we were glad to leave for home, which we did. We charged it up to experience. It was

sad, because Mr. Yamagashi—I don't know how much he spent to build the building and enlarge it, and as soon as they enlarged it, the gangsters took over.

He paid our way home. Mr. Yamagashi was a very honorable man. He passed away just maybe two years ago, but I've always thought of him as one of the few intelligent, loyal friends that we ever had.

I'll continue on by saying that we took odd jobs as we came back to California. We naturally couldn't earn the kind of money that we were earning, and yet we couldn't see ourselves going back to another session in the bingo games, because now it got to a point where, even if a place opened up, you could get as good a job in other places, because of the inflation over a period of years. Roosevelt was beginning to show signs of recovery of the economy, and so when Mr. Yamagashi came to San Francisco to talk to me about coming to Reno, why, I said, "Sure! I'll go to Reno," because I could trust the man. I came up here to take the place of a man who had this assistant manager's job, who wanted to leave, because he wanted to go back to Japan to marry his wife who some people had arranged for him to marry in Japan, and he was going to retire in Japan, anyway. So he wasn't coming back, so I had no worry about losing the job back to him.

One of the interesting things I can recall back in Ocean Park was when I was working there, I met a movie actor from Japan. His name was Henry Okowa, who finally went back to Japan well before World War II. He was working at Paramount Studios, but between jobs he was working in the bingo game with us. That is how I got acquainted with him. Very handsome man! I'll show you his picture. He is one of the few friends I had in Japan. I must have relatives there, but I've never been there, so I don't know.

Anyway, I came to Reno in 1936 and have lived here ever since. When I came, I didn't think I would be here this long, but totally, I believe, I've been here fifty-six years. So I know quite a bit about Reno. When you live in a small town, it's very easy to become acquainted with politicians, to know the state senators, congressmen and women. We have one at the moment, but I understand we're going to have two pretty soon, because the Las Vegas population boom has required that Nevada get a second congressman. The mayor of Reno, the council people, the mayor of Sparks, I know them even today, even without reason, because they are in the news quite a bit, and we have the same types of politicians that we've always had, feathering their own nests. [laughter] We hope things will change with the progress of a more intelligent general public who will elect good people, intelligent people, that can work for the community honestly, instead of taking payoffs and making money for themselves.

I worked for this Reno club as an assistant manager, which is somewhat like a vice president, a public relations person. We would open the place at seven o'clock in the evening and close somewhere between eleven and twelve at night, and then it was my duty to go to the various bars. At that time it was a square block, one block on Virginia to Second Street, both sides of the street. Left down Second Street, there was the Grand Hotel and Cafe, Leon and Eddie's, and such. Go around the corner to Center Street where bars were on both sides of the street. Then the Golden Hotel was there at the time. Today that place is called Harrah's Club, and the Palace Club was also purchased by Harrah's Club. There's an alley there called Douglas Alley, between the railroad tracks and Second Street, that small alley. They had bars on the railroad side of the building, and then also from the railroad side



they had bars on that side. Reno was just full of nothing but bars. [laughter] It amazes me that all of them could make a living.

There were small gambling places; some bars had their own blackjack games and a few slot machines, but today things have changed. The small casino owner without a hotel is hurt badly, because he can't control the customers who have bad luck and lose. They can't just go to another table, another table, and change. They just leave the place, because there's nothing else to do. Motels are hurting, because they don't have a casino right next to them. The only time they get any business is when the hotels are so full that they refer customers to the various motels that cater to that type of an agreement. It's very different today than what we had in those days.

But getting back to public relations work with the club, I had a horrible time, because in Los Angeles I could not afford to go to bars and pay fifty cents a drink. Up here in Reno the drinks were cheaper, and my boss gave me a hundred dollars to spend in one night. [laughter] He says, "You go spend this money and make friends for our club." So, try as I might, it was impossible, because I never had time to stop and figure why I couldn't spend this money, but one time much later, after I kept wondering why I couldn't spend that hundred dollars a night, I decided it was the price of the drinks. See, a drink was poured in a small shot, a one ounce glass, which I don't think many people drink nowadays, but in those days they did. You can order a shot of whiskey for fifteen cents, two for twenty-five cents, so I figured at two for twenty-five cents, that's eight drinks for a dollar, which means that with a hundred dollars I'd have to buy eight hundred drinks. I couldn't possibly do that, because this one block square, which was four blocks, and maybe a few places across the street, at the maximum it was about six

blocks of bars. I just couldn't spend that much money.

There was a place called the Dog House which was a little off the beaten path on Center Street, and they had a big round table with seating for about twenty. As soon as I'd walk in the door, they'd welcome me with open arms, because they knew that I was spending money. I would say money makes friends, because before I'd even sit down, every seat was taken, except the one they left for me, because if I didn't have a seat, if I couldn't sit, maybe I wouldn't buy a drink, see. So I'd say, "Buy the table a drink", and there goes.

Well, the girls there were pretty smart. See, they had what they called B Girls; they are bar girls, and they'd try to get you drunk and . . . but they never tried to get me drunk, because they knew if I got drunk, I wouldn't be back. [laughter] So they let me sip one drink, and they could order two or three or whatever they wanted. So they helped me spend, but I couldn't afford to spend the bulk of the money there, either, because they could come and play bingo in our place—maybe not as much as I would spend there—so you have to gauge that as a principle of business. You don't spend that much. Sometimes I'd buy one round of drinks and leave, sometimes two rounds, and very seldom more than two.

So I met a bartender after I left this place on Center Street, and he said, "Young man, you got troubles?"

I said, "What makes you say that?"

He says, "You come in here about three o'clock every morning, and you don't look like you are in very good shape, and yet you sit and buy the bar drinks, and I don't have very many customers, but you visit with me, and then you go on your way."

I said, "No, I don't have any troubles, but that's part of my job, public relations. I've got

to buy a drink. If I don't drink with them, they don't drink."

The bartender sympathized with me, and he says, "I know you, what you are talking about." He says, "If a customer says, 'Have a drink,' and I don't pour myself a drink, and I drink tea . . . I know bars that tried that, and the guys won't come to this bar. You gotta drink with them, because if they're happy, they want to make you feel happy." But he says, "I can tell you one mistake you're making; you're drinking straight shots of Canadian Club."

In those days that was *the* popular drink. Today it's V-O. It's the same kind of whiskey made in Canada. But he says, "You're drinking two drinks to their one, because they always order 7-Up highballs or different drinks like that, which has much more, like at least six ounces in volume, and you're getting a one-ounce of straight liquor, and no matter how good the liquor is, you're going to get drunk pretty soon." So he said, "I advise you to change drinks."

So I said, "OK. What do you advise me to drink?"

He says, "Drink highballs."

I said, "What kind of highballs?" I said, "You have to get very elementary with me, because I really don't know how to drink. How I hold this much liquor is a puzzle to me, too."

You see my father was a pretty good drinker, so I guess I inherited that from him. I could hold quite a bit of liquor without feeling drunk. I always made the rounds, and I could be kind of tipsy, but I always got back home and never got hurt, never created an argument, and so that's the way I spent my boss's money, but I wondered what my boss thought of me, the manager of this particular club that I worked for here in Reno, because I would bring back change and just put it in the bag he gave it to me in and say, "Here's

your change." I'd tell him how many tips I left, and I never told him how many drinks I had, because it varied so much, and he understood that, but he got enough change back to know that I wasn't short-changing him. So we got along fine.

Then one day he suggested to me, "You don't seem to drink that much, and you may not enjoy drinking that much, so why don't you take somebody to dinner, one of my good customers?" So I began doing that, and then I got rid of the money pretty good, because he said, "You can take your wife, and she can make conversation with the lady, and you can make conversation with the husband. Take one couple or two couples or whatever." There were people that used to come from Truckee and Susanville and Carson City, and I got to know those people quite well, especially the out-of-town people. He said, "You can take them out for dinner, and I am sure they will appreciate it." So I did that, and, surprisingly, I got rid of the money much easier. My job was very easy. If I didn't like somebody that worked in the club, I'd tell the boss, "I wish you'd release that man because . . ."

*You have lived in Reno then since 1936. When World War II started, how did the war affect you?*

Well, it affected us greatly, because at that point Japanese Nationals were not allowed to own businesses or property, and so they didn't own this property; they were only renting. When the banks froze the assets, they didn't take it. They just stopped letting the banks give us any of it so that we could continue operations, to pay our help, even. This closed the club down effectively, and without money to operate the place we had to look for something to do outside of the gambling business. There weren't that many

bingo games that would hire me, because I gave them such a hard time; we were the foremost bingo game in town. So I'm sure they wouldn't hire me, and I wouldn't want to work for those kinds of people, anyway.

So I said to Mr. Yamagashi, "The best thing we can do is probably lease the place for a year," to see what would happen in a year's time. So he looked for probable people who might want to run the place, and somehow Bill Harrah, who had his own bingo place and was not doing that well, wanted our place, because this was a number one bingo place in Reno. So he made a deal to rent the place, and I guess he bid enough to get the sublease for one year. So he took the place over and operated it, and if you look at the results of what happened through that operation, you can see Harrah's Club today with casinos in Atlantic City, Las Vegas, Laughlin, and many other places. Well, Bill Harrah passed away, so he doesn't get the benefit of it, but I am sure that his widow is entitled to some things.

That's the end of another era, when you think about it—gaming as such. Bingo games are too slow for the average gambler, so it isn't a popular thing, except where they offer large prizes like Indian reservations where they can have thousands of people playing for one small pot, and they could make all kinds of money because of the number of people that play the cards. If you want to do something like that for people without giving any value in return for their money, why, I guess you can operate a bingo game. Other than that, I don't think it's possible to make a profit.

So we went into different things. I have no idea, because the war came so suddenly. The thing was shut down, the place was closed. I made up my mind that I just had to get a job, because I needed money to support the family. The first job I got was weeding garlic for these Italian farmers around this area at fifty cents

an hour. We worked with the Indians who were hired for the same rate. Well, fifty cents an hour weeding onions doesn't exactly keep us eating very well, so I didn't do that very long. I talked to my friend in the East and he said, "You could get a job out here, if you want to come."

But I said, "I don't think I'd like to go out there, because if I do, the weather is so hot and sticky and miserable, we who were born in the West are not used to that kind of weather, and even in Kansas City, when I was there in 1933, they have rain drops as big as cupfuls at a time, and how could I work in a place like that?"

He said, "Come on out and try it." So I did, and he put me up in his two-bedroom apartment.

Well, I was imposing on him, and I couldn't sleep well. I stayed there for three months, and I said, "I'll go back to Reno and starve, because you're paying a better wage, but I'm not giving your boss a dollar's worth of work for the dollar he's paying me, so I want to go home."

So I came back to Reno, and what little I learned about the tire business there I used at the local Firestone Store. I went in there, and I asked the manager, "Can you give me a job in your tire department somewhere, because I have a little experience."

He said to me, "Yes, we'll try you for two weeks, but you're an Oriental, and I imagine you're Japanese, and if the customers don't like you, I'm going to have to get you to leave. So I can't give you a job as such, but we will give you a two weeks' trial period."

So I said, "All right, I'll work under those conditions, because I need a job; I just have to have some money."

So I worked there, and there was one mechanic there that used to think I was Chinese. He said, "Those Japs," and such as



that. [laughter] So I didn't pay any attention to him; I just kept working. You know, he became one of my very best friends after I worked there awhile, because he found out that I actually acted like a human being. He'd tell me about his fishing days and his hobbies; he was an older person and a very fine man. He hated Japs, because he reads what he reads in the newspapers and believes it, and he thinks that we who are born in America are the same as those people who bombed Pearl Harbor, but he learned different, so he changed, and so did the whole store.

I made it my business. I never mentioned it to the manager, "But nobody has said anything against me, have they?" Which I knew they wouldn't because I treated everybody with courtesy.

Finally, I got enough raises that the manager said to me, "I can't give you any more raises until I get a title for you, because Sacramento Firestone says you're the top paid employee in the whole district."

So I said, "You can give me the title, but I don't worry about it. You can call me whatever you want; I'll still do the same thing, but I've just got to have a raise. I can't work for the putrid wages." So he delayed these raises; he would never get them from Sacramento, because if he raises wages, that's taking money out of his profits, because he's paid a bonus at the end of each year, and if I earn more money, he's going to earn less, but if business is that much better, then he gets better pay, but he's thinking about these things, so he can't give me that much of a raise, either. He just wants to pay me enough to keep me there, that's all, and I knew this, so I said, "Are you going to give me a raise or aren't you?"

He said no, and we were on a particularly busy day. He said, "I'll tell Sacramento."

I said, "You told Sacramento many number of times, and I haven't gotten my

raise, so I'm quitting." I went outside, and I took all the tools and threw them on the floor, just like that, so he would be sure to hear them, and I went in the back and out into the alley and down the street to a bar, and I was drinking.

This happened about, oh, one o'clock in the afternoon. He came over there about four o'clock, and he said, "You better come back and stop this drinking. I won't tell anybody you were out here drinking for all afternoon."

I said, "Who cares? I quit, and you have no jurisdiction over me." So I said, "I can't take this baloney any longer."

So he said, "I definitely promise I'll get you a raise next week, if you come back to work."

So I said, "All right. And if it isn't in my paycheck at the end of this week, why, you know where I'm going." So I followed him back to the place and helped him close the place up, and I went home. So after that I knew that my way to win my point was throw the tools down and walk out. So I did that to him about three times. [laughter] And every time he came after me, too, because he needed me, because I knew every department, what everybody had to do, where everything was. The stock was upstairs in different places, and he was just plain lost; he never had to do any of that any more because of me. I had made myself so valuable to him that he had to get me back there, [laughter] and I think that hurt his pride, but I am sorry, it was his own fault, too.

I said, "Do you know what my next step is? I want to go into business, not for Firestone, and if you want to be in a partnership and be in business . . . These guys are so cheap; they're not going to give you any money. You will always be under their thumb, and you are always thinking about the five-hundred-dollar bonus you're going to get. I don't know how many of those you get a year, but

you should get at least two, Fourth of July and Christmas, because that was what I was getting at the club.”

He said, “Well, I have a family to support.”

I said, “You can support them better with your own business.” He showed me the books over a period. I was there, I think, for four or five years, and he was so proud, “We’re not in the red ink anymore; we’re in the black ink!” He said, “We’re doing this much, so my bonus is going to be better.”

So I said, “Sure, but it’s limited. That stuff you’re getting is peanuts. I know what kind of money you should be earning. I know what I should be earning. So I want to go into business.”

OK, so we went into business. It took me about six months before he would agree, and during those six months I quit him, you know, threw my tools down. So finally he said OK, and we got the General Tire franchise; completely different tire. We opened the business, which we had for ten years. Of course, the business is a proposition where you have what they call a limited partnership. I guess you know what that is. I was a limited partner, because I didn’t have enough money saved to be half and half with him, but my work—I never did only one third of the business or whatever—I did what had to be done. I even worked on Saturdays and Sundays, if it was necessary. He became the politician; he became a city councilman, and he was really getting up in the political world.

So finally, after, I think it was about the sixth year, I said, “If you are going to continue doing this, I’m leaving. I’ll have my own tire shop, because you got to pay me off according to the percentage, and I know the bookkeeper who we hired, and he is a very fair person. He will see that I get what I need.”

So he said, “You can’t quit me.” And he stalled me. He said, “We don’t have enough

money to pay you off,” and all this stuff. So I stayed there for almost ten years.

Finally, I said, “I’m leaving, and I’m going to start suing you for that money, if you don’t pay it, because you told me lies just to keep me here. I cannot run the office and the outside business, so I’m leaving.”

He said, “OK. I’ll pay you off,” because he knew I was serious. So he paid me off. See, I had three thousand dollars invested, which became thirteen thousand dollars in capital. So I’m walking around with money in my pocket, but I was looking for a job or whatever, because you feel freer when you have this kind of money.

During the time I was there, since he was on the city council, I got acquainted with the assistant city manager. He said to me, “I have a piece of property I want to buy, but I just don’t have enough money, and I can’t get anybody to go fifty-fifty partners with me, because I don’t have much money saved up. If you can buy half of it, and I buy half of it, why we can manage.”

So I looked at the property. I didn’t know anything about land, but I figured it’s pretty good to have land. So he and I bought this property, put so much down and so much payments, and as soon as we bought the property, one man came to us and said, “I want one acre in this corner here. How much do you want?”

So I asked my partner, “How much should we sell it to him for? This is going to ease our payments a little bit, if we sell it to him. He only wants one acre in the far corner where it’s out of the way.” I forgot the amount, but I think he offered us fifteen hundred dollars. You see, all of this property we had purchased for three hundred an acre, but he offered us fifteen hundred, so that was quite a good deal for us. We got more money than we expected for the property—five times as much. So he

was happy, and so was I. We celebrated, had dinner together.

He had to leave the country, because he had a lot better job in California, and he said, "If you want to buy my property, I'll sell it to you for five hundred an acre." This was about a year later.

I said, "I don't think I can manage five hundred an acre more than what I am paying now, so I have to pass." So he sold it—he gave me first choice, but I couldn't afford to buy it. So he sold it to someone else, and he left for California, and I've written letters to him, because, thanks to him, I built up a little capital, too, but I don't know whatever happened to him, because I never even knew what town he moved to after years passed.

Then I joined organizations like the Toastmasters Club, which is an excellent club to learn to speak and become more confident when you get up in a crowd to speak to people. It's difficult if you've never had any experience. This man next door, while I was still in the tire shop, said to me, "You have to become a Toastmaster." He kept coming over there and saying, "Fred, are you going with me tonight?" I would say some excuse for not going—no real excuse, but I was just afraid.

That went on—this man kept after me—for one full year. Every week when he had to go to Toastmasters, he came to the place, and I felt so uncomfortable, because I knew he was coming. I said, "I'm going to have to go with him, because he just doesn't give up." So when he came, I said, "I'm going tonight. I'll go home and change my clothes and be with you." That's my first experience with the Toastmasters Club.

I met somebody else who was a first-time person. He became mayor of Winnemucca. He moved there. He became a good speaker. I guess I didn't become a very good speaker, but at least I learned by watching how other

people do it. I made many friends who taught me. After my drinking experiences with the club, I was able to drink with people, to talk with them, stay at the Toastmasters Club until three o'clock in the morning with them to talk about different things that we argued about.

You are not supposed to be with a club more than two years, because you get to know the people so well that their criticism is something that you already know they are going to say, because you get to know each individual that well. They say you should move to another club after two years, but I think I stayed there three or four. Then I moved to another club. When they formed the Gourmet Club, which were all experienced people but from different other clubs, I stayed with them for another three or four years, but then I got tired of it, so I quit.

Well, in the meantime, I joined the Masonic fraternity and became a Mason and Scottish Riter and a Shriner. They say if you become president of Toastmasters Club, which I did before I went there, you will become president of any club you want to be. Well, I don't think I necessarily want to be a president of any club, because you have too many responsibilities, and you have to work so hard, but you know how to be a president, to be impartial. You don't enter into arguments when two people are arguing. You create order and see that they both have an equal opportunity to settle their differences. I don't tell them which one won the argument; the listening crowd tells them that. You are only a judge as president, except leadership situations, where, if the club is not able to conduct their meetings at the same place, you have to locate a new place. I think that's a responsibility of a president, to get another location to do it. Then you have other people you can discuss it with, so you do. But a president isn't that all powerful; you shouldn't

be. So I had no desire to be president of any club, and the Japanese-Americans had gotten to such situations that I had to be president three times, because the club would come before me, because it had up and down membership.

But today I will never offer to be president of a club, because the new, younger generation have different ideas. I don't want to wish my ideas to be performed by them, which I am sure I wouldn't be that successful if I tried that. I enjoyed the Masons, and my wife is in the Eastern Star, which is the ladies' organization of the Masons. She became one of the national officers of Eastern Star, so she feels that she has accomplished her goals. We have friends all over that I can think of. California has the most, because they're the easiest to visit, but we don't visit as much as we used to, because at my age I don't think I want to die on the road, [laughter] because I can't see well, or something may happen. So we keep traveling to a minimum.

*Did you and your wife get married here in Reno?*

No, I married her in Los Angeles, because she's from there. I couldn't afford to marry her, because I didn't have enough money to offer her any kind of a married life, but when I got this job in Reno, I knew that I could support a wife, so I decided, and we got married the following June. We got married in the Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles and came back here.

Well, I feel like I've been a very fortunate person, because good things happened to me. By living in Reno, I didn't have to go to a camp as such, because I'm outside of the Western Defense Command, which evacuated all the coastal states.

*That's right. So do you have children?*

Oh, yes. I have a daughter that's in Danville, California, a son in Alameda, California. You see, California is a place where it seems greener most of the time. This is a desert, and when they see that greenness of California, I think it affects them, because they've moved there and never returned. [laughter] They come to visit us. Our son-in-law is working for Kaiser Aluminum in Pleasanton, which is south of Danville. I think he has some officer capacity there, because we don't discuss it at all, but I know that he has privileges that ordinary employees don't. Our grand-children—granddaughters—we have three from our daughter. The eldest received a scholarship to U.C. Irvine, because she had quite a good singing voice, and she was in the high school play—this Danville high school. She followed it, but then opportunities in Irvine, which is very close to Los Angeles, aren't as good as you might expect.

Well, that daughter worked in a place called Cocoa's Restaurant, or something, which hires people who are studying theatrical arts and voice and things like that, because Irvine is supposedly *the* place to go for that sort of thing. Even in medicine they're becoming very prominent now. It's a big campus. It wasn't so big when she went there, but she even went to New York for six months by herself, working at jobs, and had an offer to work in Yul Brynner's musical; it's that play about the dancer—*The King and I*. She could have applied for work, but she felt that Yul Brynner was beginning to fail in age, and she was looking for the future. I guess he passed away as she predicted, and she came back to the West Coast, but she got six months or so of experience with the New York theatrical group. She got acquainted with this Queen Mary Group that used to meet at the Queen Mary in Long Beach, and different places

where they have things like that, but she is talented. Yet, I think parts for her would be very minimal, because she is so small and short. She isn't tall enough to accept parts, I don't think. She came up to sing for my wife's installations and to various offices of the Eastern Star and the Daughters of the Nile who are wives of Shriners. In the meantime, she met someone that she became interested in and got married, and they live now south of Los Angeles in a place called Rancho Santa Margarita. I don't know where it is, because I've never been there.

The second daughter graduated from U.C.L.A., and she is working in Marin County, which is north of San Francisco. She does different businesses and travels and organizes businesses for this man who is quite wealthy. She has been to Taiwan two or three times; to Korea, I think, once, and Hong Kong once, Puerto Rico, New York, and she has traveled extensively. She sold a house she bought, so I don't know where to find her now. [laughter] I will find out very shortly.

The youngest daughter went to school at U.C. San Diego, and she worked in the school there for about a year or so, I guess. Then, she's back in Danville. She's single and working for Frito Lay, of all people, in the office, of course, not making potato chips or things. [laughter] But she has an excellent job there as office help. Frito Lay is moving into Pleasanton, because they're in San Jose now, but they're transferring their offices and factory into the Pleasanton area.

Now, my son's daughter went to U.C. Santa Cruz. They all went to different schools, strangely. She did that because she's her mother's daughter, and she likes to be near mother to come home and visit. It's only less than fifty miles from Alameda, and yet the last six months of her university career, I think, she's transferred to U.C.L.A. to get the

experience of a larger university. What she's going to do with something, I don't know.

The son, the only boy—four granddaughters and one grand-son I have—he is finishing high school shortly, and I don't know what he's going to do. [laughter] And that's about all I can tell you, I think, but I'm very proud that all of our kids have gotten decent educations, and they are going to have a much better life than I had to start out with.

But I'm very thankful that we own a home here and are able to live in retirement without becoming homeless. [laughter] I'm glad that you came to talk to me, and I don't know how you're going to use this, but . . .

*I needed it, and I really appreciate your help.*

Well, as soon as you began talking to me on the phone . . . I've never done this sort of thing before with a young person like you, but you have a every nice approach, and without it, I don't think you can get interviews the way you do. I don't think even Henry would have spoken to you, Henry Hattori. Oh, you've got to meet David Baba. He's an attorney here.





MARY DATE

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*Noriko Kunitomi: Today is November 4, 1992. I am interviewing Mrs. Mary Date at her house in Reno, Nevada. The interview will be about Japanese in Nevada and in the United States. Mrs. Date, does the University of Nevada Oral History Program have your permission to make available to the public the tapes and transcripts of this interview?*

Mary Date: Yes.

*To start with, I am interested in basic information. For example, when did your family come to the United States?*

I have my father's old passport somewhere, but I think he came about 1906. My mother did not come with him. She came later as a picture bride. *Sashin Kekkon.*

*So he picked out her picture after he came to the United States and wanted to get married?*

She came, I think, about 1916. She is from Kumoto Ken; my father is from Fukuoka Ken.

*Do you remember how old they were at the time?*

When my father came?

Yes.

I'm not sure. I don't think he was twenty.

*Has he ever told you about the reasons why he came to the United States?*

Not really. I've wondered, but it's too late now.

*Do you know when your parents came to Nevada?*

1933. I was born in Nebraska, and then I grew up in Colorado until I was thirteen. Then we moved to Nevada; to Fallon. We stayed there one year, and then came to Reno. We've been here ever since. My mother and father both died here. My mother died when I was very young; I was fourteen. I am the oldest of

seven children, and I helped my father raise them. He was a farmer. After he retired from farming, he came here to live with me for fourteen years.

*Was he a farmer since he came to the United States?*

He was a farmer most of his life. I think probably that's all he knew how to do.

*What kind of farming did he do?*

Truck gardening. He grew vegetables, and he bunched carrots and onions and things like that, and then took them to the market every day.

*Do you know why your family moved from Nebraska to Colorado?*

No. He did big farming in Colorado. They raised melons and sugar beets, corn, and about in the 1930s, many families left the farms in Colorado because of drought. So he came to Nevada. He was going to raise melon seeds in Fallon. He had a friend who was going to promote that, but the melon seeds sprouted inside the melon when the melons were ripe, so that was no good. So then he came to Reno.

*What did he do here in Reno?*

Truck garden. I had four brothers, and they used to help. Then the war broke out, and one by one, they all volunteered and left, so then he had to quit doing that. Then he came to live with me.

*When did you get married?*

1941. The year the war broke out. At that time my husband had a fish market where the

Hilton is now on Sierra and Commercial Row on the south side of the railroad tracks, but we had a bad time, because a lot of people were not patronizing our store because we were Japanese, and restaurants did the same. We stayed there for about twenty years. It wasn't an easy living.

*Could you tell me more about the fish market?*

Well, at that time we were the only Oriental store here. We carried rice and *shoyu* and all the Japanese things, so all the Japanese people from, oh, I would say, a fifty mile radius came into the store. The girls who were married to servicemen and lived at Stead Air Force Base—they came. It was interesting. We knew all the Japanese then, but we don't know any of them now. [laughter]

*Could you tell me about every day life?*

We worked there from eight until six. I didn't go every day, but my husband did.

*Where did he get his fish?*

We shipped the fish in from Seattle and California, for example, San Pedro. San Pedro is a big fishing center in southern California. We carried things like tofu that we got from Sacramento. There was nobody here that made it; nobody does, still, you know. We have to get it all shipped in.

*The last time I talked with your husband, Mr. Ken Date on the phone, he said he came to Nevada and entered the fish market business, because, at the time, Nevada had a lot of fish here.*

Well, he had a sister who was married to the man who owned the fish market,



originally. That's how he came here, and he likes to fish. There isn't much to fish here, anymore, really, but then he still goes fishing all the time. That's where he is today. [laughter] He's out at Pyramid.

*When he brings home fish from Pyramid Lake or the Truckee River, do you cook it?*

I don't like a lot of the fish that he catches here. He gets fresh water fish like trout in the river and the lakes. I don't like trout. I like ocean fish to eat. The fish that we sold at the market was mostly ocean fish, like salmon and sole, crabs, lobster, all that kind of thing. I don't like trout. He eats it; I cook it for him; he'll eat it, and the kitty eats it. We have a kitty.

*How did you learn how to cook fish and Japanese food?*

From the cookbooks. I didn't know how to cook, because I was only fourteen when my mother died, and I never cooked until she died. So I've learned. I have hundreds of cookbooks. I like to cook.

*What about your father? Did your father cook sometimes?*

He cooked sometimes, but not very much. When he was living here with me, he would cook when I was at work sometimes, but not very good. [laughter]

*Did your father and children expect you to cook Japanese food mostly?*

No. They don't know Japanese food, because at that time we couldn't get very much Japanese food here. I know one time, my father took my sister, who was about six years old, to California for a friend's wedding,

and for the first time she ate *maki sushi* with the *nori* around it. She peeled it all off. My father said it was because she never saw it before. I never made *sushi*, and she was only two when my mother died, so she would not know. I never knew how to make them at that time. I've learned since.

My father spoke half English and half Japanese to us, so I've forgotten how to speak Japanese. When I was in Colorado, I went to Japanese school in the summertime. They had a man who earned his tuition to go to the University of Chicago. He was from Japan, and he was earning his tuition by teaching us Japanese during the summer months. I went six years. I could read newspapers, and we were just learning to write with *Fude* when we came to Nevada. If your mother is gone, you don't speak Japanese at home. Between my brothers and sisters, we spoke English most of the time, so I've forgotten Japanese.

*But your father could speak pretty good English?*

Not good English, broken English. [laughter]

*Understandable?*

Well, he would ask us to explain the newspapers to him. He could read the local newspapers, and he could understand. He always used to get the Japanese *Shimbun* from San Francisco. We used to get the Japanese newspaper. I don't how large a circulation they have anymore. I don't think it's very good, because most of the *Issei* have passed away.

*There are a lot of Japanese students here.*

I know a lot of students here.

*But they have subscribed to Japanese newspapers from San Francisco.*

They do? They can still get it? Oh, like the *Nichibei Times*? Oh, I didn't know it was still going, because I don't see it.

*Could you tell me how much education you've had?*

I just went to high school. My mother died, and I couldn't go to school for a few years, because I had to stay home and take care of my brothers and sisters. We used to live on a ranch up there where Bally's is now. (Well, it changed to the Reno Hilton.) We lived out there just past the Indian camp. I used to walk every morning from there to Reno High School, which was close to where the Sundowner is now. That's after I got up and made breakfast and cleaned it up and made lunches for the rest of them to go to school. If I had to do that now, I would die! [laughter] But when you're young, and you want to go to school, and you feel that you've been deprived, because of the circumstances, you have a strong will. That was a long time ago.

*What about your brothers and sisters? Did they get a higher education?*

No. They just went to high school. One sister went to Salt Lake City to become a nurse, because we didn't have a nursing school here, but she got married before she finished. Then I have one brother who was a high school drop out. He joined the army, and he got his GED (General Equivalency Diploma) while he was in the service, and then he picked up university credits here and there. Usually, when you go to the university, your credits are all on one sheet—your four

years. His university credits are like this [gestures with hands wide apart] because he got two credits here, two credits there. He stayed in the service for over twenty years, and he has a university degree now. He finally got a university degree. Two of my brothers stayed in the service for over twenty years. The youngest one was a prisoner of war in the Korean War. He was over there over two years, but he came back.

They all volunteered, and some of the Japanese people thought they were crazy, because at that time a lot of the Japanese were in [a relocation] camp, like my in-laws. They came from camp. They came from camp to here, and then they went back to California where they came from. But it's hard to understand; I'm sure it was hard for them to understand how people like my brothers could volunteer, when they put *Nihongin* in camps. You've read about that.

It's been an interesting life. I have one daughter; she was born and raised here. She finished college here, and she went to San Francisco. She worked for the Internal Revenue Service as an accountant. She doesn't work anymore. [laughter]

*She retired?*

She didn't retire; she quit. [laughter] She didn't work long enough to retire; let's put it that way.

*Your daughter got married and she has a family with her?*

Her husband's family lives in Berkeley. I just have one daughter, and that's the one who's coming today. She's retired, and they have no children, so I'm not a grandma. [laughter]

*Did any of your brothers or sisters work in the railroad?*

No. I don't think my father ever did. When he first came, he came to San Francisco, and he worked in California awhile, and then I think he went to Idaho for awhile. Then he went to Nebraska, because he had friends. You go where your friends are, you know. That's how come he ended up in Nebraska for several years. I don't know how many years, but he told me he used to work at the YMCA in Omaha, waiting on tables while he went to school. He could write better English than any of us. He wrote nice writing in English, the Palmer Method. I think he worked there for quite a few years, because he didn't get married for about ten years, I think, after he came. Where are you from?

*Osaka.*

Osaka. After I quit working about twelve years ago, when I was sixty-two, I took a trip to Japan. I went on a tour with my youngest sister, and she doesn't speak any Japanese. We went on a tour, and then afterwards, we spent about four days. We went to visit relatives in Fukuoka. It was interesting. [laughter]

*Did you see a lot of your relatives there?*

Relatives? Yes, a lot of my father's relatives, but I didn't see my mother's relatives. Some day I would like to see them, but now I don't I feel like I can go.

*So your father, after he came here, he kept in contact with relatives in Japan?*

Not too much, but he never went back. He heard from them. One of my cousins had a picture of a soldier on the wall, and he said

it was his brother who died in, I think it was Saipan, in the war. My father wrote to his family and told them that his sons were all in the army. I had four brothers. They were all in the service.

*Did your sisters and brothers and your father still keep some Japanese heritage?*

We ate rice. We ate rice, maybe, once a day, but we didn't eat it for breakfast, you know, like a lot of the California people; they eat rice and *misoshiru* and all that for breakfast. We never did that, but I think it was because it was not available. I don't think that I cooked Japanese foods until after I was married, because my husband is from California, from a large Japanese community, and he likes Japanese foods. My daughter, who was born and raised here, likes all kinds of Japanese foods. She likes things that I don't like.

*Does she eat raw fish?*

Oh, yes, I like that.

*Oh, really?*

Oh, yes. We had that at the store.

*That's nice. It's expensive.*

It is expensive, I know. We just had friends come from California, and when they'd come, they always stopped in Sacramento, and they'd buy us *sashimi* and *tofu* and *kamaboko* and all that. I like Japanese foods, I think, better than Yoshoku now. As you grow older, you don't like so much meat.

*How about you people, do you miss your Japanese foods? I cook Japanese foods.*

Do you? You go to the Tokyo Market?

*To the Korean Market in Sparks.*

Oh, the Korean Market? In Sparks?

*Yes, in Sparks, near Prater and Pyramid Way.*

It's a small store?

*Yes, and just across from Raley's there is a kind of small marketplace, you know, a plaza, and one of the stores is Collier Market.*

Oh, really? I don't go to Sparks too often. It's kind of out of the way. Usually, we get our stuff at Tokyo Market, but they are so expensive.

*That's why I go to the Collier Market. It is less expensive. Not much.*

Well everything is, anyway.

*Almost twice. Do you ever have Japanese activities?*

We have the JACL, Japanese-American Citizens League. That's the only thing. That's all there is here, and that isn't very good, because the younger people are not that interested. It's just mostly for social purposes.

*Could you tell me about when you were young, and you celebrated New Year's? The Japanese celebrate New Year's more, but you don't hear it here in the United States.*

I used to, when we had the fish market, because we used to get *sashimi* and *tako*; we used to get *kamaboko* and all that; and we tried to get *sashimi*, but we usually didn't get it. At that time, I guess, I used to make *sushi*

a little bit, but, it's too much work, too, when you're working. [laughter] But now as we get older, we get lazy, and we don't do that very much. We used to get together at New Year's. We used to go from house to house, but not anymore.

*When you were in Nebraska, did you have some kind of different activities, like celebrate different days?*

Well, there were more Japanese there, and they were all farm people, and so I think we had more activities, but farm people are busy people, and the only time they had leisure time was in the wintertime. They used to celebrate New Year's then; I remember that. They used to make saké. [laughter] My father did not drink, but a lot of his friends did. Now, I have just one brother who is married to *Nihongin*. The rest of them are married to Caucasians, so then, you don't eat Oriental foods so much. But when my brothers come to visit, they like to come and eat at my house, because I cook a lot of things. I have one brother living in Florida; one sister in Hawaii; one sister in San Francisco, and I have one brother here. I have one brother in Mountain View, California; he's married to *Nihongin*. And I have one brother who died.

*Do you remember when your father and mother taught you about Japanese values, like Japanese duties? For example, you are Japanese; you should be a hard worker; cooperation is important, and things like that.*

I think we were too young yet for them to try, and then they were too busy trying to earn a living. I know there are families who lived here and did learn Japanese ways. There was one family that worked for the railroad, and that mother taught her children how to

read and write in *Nihongo*. Like us, we were supposed to have learned when we went to school, but then when you don't use it, you forget. But when my father passed away, he still had Japanese citizenship, so I had to report to his village about his death, and you have to fill in that paper. I had Japanese people help me fill it in, and with a dictionary I could remember. He died of a stroke, that's *noikutzu*. I remembered how to write *Nihongo*, and they were shocked that I knew. Some things you can remember a little bit, but if I had to write a letter now, I could never do it in Japanese. Before I went to Japan, I contacted my relatives, and I sent them a letter that I typed on the typewriter so they wouldn't have any trouble reading my writing. [laughter]

*Did they speak English in Japan?*

No. They'd write letters back to me in Japanese. I could read that, but then I'd write them a letter back in English.

*When you raised your daughter, did you raise her in the American way or in the Japanese way?*

In the American way, because I don't know the Japanese way. [laughter]

*What about your husband? Didn't he want his daughter to be Japanese oriented, a person who has Japanese values in her life?*

No, he didn't. I did most of the disciplining or whatever. No, he didn't think too much about things like that. She went to Reno High School; she was the only *Nihongin* in her class, and there were about three hundred and fifty students in her graduating class. So she didn't know Japanese people. When she went to the university, there was one professor up

there; I've forgotten his name, but he speaks Japanese. He said *Date-san*, and she was really startled, because when she went to high school, or all her life, everybody called her Date. That's the easiest way to say it. If you say it the Japanese way, then they get confused. So it's always been Date. So she went to the university and this professor said *Date-san*. She didn't know any Japanese. Then when she went to San Francisco to work, there's so many more opportunities in the larger cities to learn. So she took classes in conversational Japanese, and then she's been trying to learn how to write. She's been to Japan about three times. I said, "Why don't you give up?" [laughter]

She said, "No, I want to learn, so I can talk when I go to Japan."

I told her, "You'll never make it!" [laughter] Because they talk so fast. It's just like us; we probably talk too fast. When you first came, wasn't it hard?

*Yes, you're right.*

Yes, it's the same thing. And now she's involved in *ikebana* [Japanese art of arranging flowers]. She loves that. In fact, I think she has a certificate to teach. She really loves that. So she says that she would never come back to Reno to live, because Reno doesn't have anything to offer compared to the larger cities. [laughter] She is taking lessons in Japanese cooking. She likes to cook Japanese. Her husband is *Nisei*. She is *Sansei*.

*So her husband is much older than she is?*

Yes, he is a bit older. He likes Japanese foods. Like I say, she likes more Japanese things than I do.

*Yes, I can tell.*



It's funny! [laughter]

*Could you tell me about what kind of a social life you had?*

Social life? We didn't have too much time for a social life, because we were too busy making a living, really. [laughter] We associated with *Nihongin* mostly. We used to have picnics, and we had get-togethers here, but JACL was a lot more active in the old days than it is now. Have you ever been to a JACL meeting here?

*No, I haven't, but I'm planning to go to one on the twenty-second of this month.*

They probably make *mochi* with the *mochi* machines.

*I haven't eaten mochi for three years.*

Oh you haven't eaten any *mochi* for three years?

No. [laughter]

Well, now, I don't care about *mochi*. I don't care if I don't have that. [laughter] So I probably won't go, but you better go; you take some of your friends and go. You tell them that I said so! [laughter]

*What about the social life of your mother? Did she have a social life?*

No, not much. In Colorado, they were mostly farmers, but they used to get together at New Year's and at the Japanese school. That was about it. It was a hard life. It was not easy, and you wonder how the *Issei* ever came to this country, to a strange country. My mother told me that when she first came,

she came to Seattle, and then they went by train to Nebraska. For the first time, she saw people with yellow hair and brown hair, and blue eyes and brown eyes. It must have been very strange. [laughter] She told me.

*I'm amazed that your mother came here as a picture bride, because she did not wish to come here, if your father did not pick her up as a bride?*

Well, many people came like that, as picture brides. She told me that for about six months she went to live with his family first. I guess, maybe his mother wanted to see if she would be a suitable wife or something. I don't know. I don't know how people could do things like that, but I guess that's the way they did things. A lot of people came like that, by the thousands. Well, I've been reading so many stories like that now. When I was a child, she never told me too much about her life in Japan. See that picture on the wall there in the middle, that one of Fujiyama? That is machine embroidery. She did that in Japan, so she must have had a sewing machine. Nowadays, in the craft shops they have machine embroidery, but it's *nothing* like that. I like to sew, and they tell me, "Why don't you take a class in machine embroidery?" But it doesn't appeal to me, because I've seen better. That's silk thread. She said they used to raise silk worms, and they colored . . . they dyed the silk. I had other pieces of flowers and things like that, but I gave some to my brothers and sisters, because I didn't want to keep all of them, but that's a machine embroidery, and she was a good seamstress, I think. That's my mother and father over there.

*When she came here, did your mother wear kimono then?*

No, she didn't come in kimonos. [laughter] I just cannot imagine people coming to a strange country with strange customs, strange dress; the food is different. She lived such a short life.

*Was she sick?*

No, she died of child birth, trying to have a baby. She was not forty years old, and she left seven children. You have more questions to ask? I want to show you something.

*Yes, I have a couple of questions.*

My father, when he lived with me, used to go up to the cemetery here, the Hillside Cemetery. One day he went up there, and he wrote these things down. These are markers that they had for people who were buried there. I'm sure that most of these are gone now, because the cemetery has been ruined, but, see, this shows you how early the *Nihongin* people came to Reno and died.

*Yes, 1912.*

You can have this article; I have other copies. This man, \_\_\_\_\_, was one of the oldest Japanese to come to America. But then, they said afterwards that it really wasn't; he wasn't the oldest; there were others who came here. He was buried here in Reno at that cemetery, and the cemetery was going to be ruined, overrun, you know, so the JACL got permission to dig up the remains and re-bury him at Mountain View Cemetery. You could have this. They had a ceremony here. Oh, see, this is when they re-buried the remains at Mountain View. They had a *Bonson* come from Penryn. At that time my father was gone, and these are a few of the *Issei* who came, you know.

*Are those people all living in Reno?*

Yes, these older people were living in Reno, that's right, and most of the others were, too. These were JACL members.

*Oh, I know him, he's Mr. Fred Aoyama, isn't he? Maybe not.*

No, no. This one is Wilson Makabe. He passed away last year or so; you probably read about him.

*Oh, I see. I was looking for his name in the phone book, and I couldn't find his name.*

No, he died. Wilson Makabe died. I don't think Aoyama is in this picture. I don't think Bud Fujii is, either. See, they were all working. This was in 1969. That's over twenty years ago. [laughter]

*These are old pictures. Do you have pictures of your family, of your father and your mother?*

Oh yes, I do. These are our children. We had International Festival and we had a girl teach the kids *odori*, and then we had to go buy kimonos for them, you know. This is mostly JACL stuff. Not very interesting. Here's some of the kids. And then the girls borrowed *Nihongi*. This is my sister; she was still here then.

*How old are you? [laughter]*

That's my girl right here. I will show you some old pictures I got together.

*Is this 1926?*

1926, yes. I'll show you where I am—right there! [laughter] This is 1927.

*Oh, more people.*

Yes, I guess we had more people.

*Those men are teachers?*

Well, this is the same thing, yes. We had the same teacher. This is my father. They had a school board, and he was on the school board. [laughter] I think that's why he's standing next to the *sensei* [teacher].

*He's the only teacher?*

For a while we had only one teacher, and then pretty soon they got so many children, they had to get another teacher. Oh, here's the teacher here, yes. This is 1928. The teacher is down here in the front somewhere with us—right there. Then we got another teacher. This is the other teacher. See, there are about fifty or sixty kids, and I had no idea how much it cost my father for us to go to Japanese school, because that's the way this man was earning his tuition. He was going to the University of Chicago. He used to go home. He used to come back at Christmas and Easter and he'd give us tests. We were supposed to be writing *nikki* (diary) every day. [laughter] I never wrote any. Just before he came out with a whole bunch of stuff at one time, they know. We didn't fool them, I don't think. This is about the year that we left Colorado. See, there weren't so many people going to school, because times were rough. This is the picture of the first graduating class. This girl and this girl graduated. I think they went eight years. They graduated. This is the school board. Yes, these are all farm people; this is the *sensei*. But, see, this man's got *tabi* on. [laughter] You see that. Yes, it's a *tabi*. They went and had that picture taken. This is what my father used to do, raise melons. This is a packing shed. We

had Mexican workers; they used to pick it and pack it in the crates, and then we used to hire somebody to haul. We used to have crate makers.

*These people are all workers at your farm?*

Yes, they are Mexicans.

*After your mother died, or before your mother died?*

This is in Colorado, yes.

*Did your father always hire Mexican people?*

In Colorado we had Mexican labor, yes.

*But not in Nevada here?*

No, not in Nevada. This is my friend's place, and that's there. Here's another one, another year. Let's see, I guess, I must have been at Japanese school when they came. This photographer was a Japanese photographer, and he came from Pueblo in the summertime when the farmers had money; then he'd come around and take pictures like this. See, those are willow tree branches that they put on top for shade. I think that year we had a *Nihongin* man from California come, and he packed the melons in the crates. That's my mother.

*Oh, is she? She's pretty. So this is you?*

I think so. [laughter]

*You just look like your mother. There is a resemblance.*

Oh, I don't know. I don't know who I look like. [laughter] Yes, that's about all that I have that's really interesting.



*So this is your house then?*

That's the back of our house where we lived, yes.

*In Colorado?*

Yes. [laughter]

*Wow, so interesting!*

I know when they would get pictures like this then my mother would send them to her family in Japan, and my father would send them to his family in Japan. That's what he used to do in Colorado. They farmed big—like about two, three hundred acres. But here in Reno, when he did truck farming, it was just like about ten, fifteen acres, because it's a lot of work. This is my friend's family. He must have made money, because he went back to Japan with his family. [laughter]

*His family is still in Japan?*

Yes.

*He never come back to the United States anymore, after he went back to Japan?*

Oh, no, he stayed there. He stayed with his family in Japan. See, the old cars that we used to have? Well, what is that? I must have it written—about 1926. That's more than sixty years ago; that's about sixty-five, sixty-six years ago. My goodness! [laughter]

*I've never seen the long pictures of that place. I just know that they're this big.*

Yes, I think the fathers got together and decided they'd better teach the kids some *Nihongo*, you know. The teachers tried to

teach us manners and how to bow and all that sort of thing, and being that we were born in America, we thought, "We don't have to bow to anybody." At least, that's how I used to think. [laughter]



BUDDY FUJII

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*Noriko Kunitomi: Today is November 2, 1992. I am interviewing Mr. Buddy Fujii today at his office in Sparks, Nevada. The interview will be on ancestors, decision making, social life, and different lifestyles in Nevada. I have your agreement here that the University of Nevada Oral History Program may open this information on the interview to the public. I am on this project to learn about Japanese people's life in Nevada after the Japanese immigrants came to the United States, especially before World War II. Do you know when your family first came to the United States, and also to Nevada?*

Buddy Fujii: My father first came to the United States probably in 1914, 1915, and in Southern California. He came to Nevada about 1928. My mother came to the United States probably about 1925 or 1926, and she also came to California first, and then came to Reno with my father. She didn't come right with my father; she came after he was here.

*They met here?*

No, they met in California. After my father was here, they came here.

*Do you know which part of Japan they came from?*

Fukuoka.

*Both of them?*

Yes, as far as I know. My mother for sure, and I am almost positive my father, but he never talked about Japan and his family. My mother talked a little bit about hers, but he didn't want anybody to talk about Japan, because we were in the United States, and he said we've got to be like Americanized here, so I know very little about his family at all, other than that he had three brothers, and there is only one of them living today.

*So all three of his brothers came to the United States?*

No. They all stayed in Japan. He was the only one who came. They all stayed in Japan.

The only reason I know this is because just recently he corresponded with the only remaining brother.

*What about your mother's side?*

Well, on my mother's side, I know very little. Most of her family, I think, stayed in Japan. She was married prior to meeting my father and had some other children who would be my half brothers and sisters. As far as I know, there are probably two or three of them some place in the United States, and we now have a member of the family doing some genealogy, trying to track them down. So we are hopeful we can find some of the people and talk to them, if they'll talk to us. [laughter]

*Do you know if she got married in Japan and then came here?*

Originally, she was married in Japan and came here, and I don't know what happened then, until she married my father.

*Did your mother come to the United States permanently, to stay here, or just for a while, to get money to get back to Japan?*

I don't know. I can't answer that one. My father came here to stay here. He did not want to go back. My mother maybe just came, you know, temporarily, but she did stay and eventually became a citizen. Both of them became citizens. My mother became one first, though. It was more important for her to become one first, before it was important to my father.

*Is there any reason for that?*

I don't know. I just know that when she was still alive and we were teenagers, she

said she wanted to become a citizen. This was right after World War II, and during the war even. Then after the war, she said she wanted to become a citizen. Well, as soon as it became available to Issei to become citizens, she wanted to become one, because some of her other friends wanted to become citizens. So I remember helping her study, so she could pass the test, and she became a citizen about a year before my father.

*Were you a student at the time?*

Yes.

*I assume you were born in the United States.*

Yes.

*Do know why your parents came to Nevada, particularly?*

Well, my father came here for two reasons—two jobs. He was a gardener, but he was also a professional gambler. He was a card player, and since gambling was legal in Nevada, he came here initially to work and then, eventually, just to play cards. He did very well. He was a well-known card player here in Reno, but he also had his gardening business, and it eventually became a nursery business—nursery and landscaping. That's all. As a child I worked there, and eventually, after I graduated from college, I went back into the business with him for quite a few years. But that's what brought him here, was just the gardening and primarily the professional gambling. But he knew, eventually, with the family, it was just not good to be a gambler, so he had to have something that was more stable. That's why he developed the nursery business.

*In California was there any possibility or place your father could learn how to gamble?*

Oh sure. Los Angeles, all over in the major cities in California, there were card houses. It was illegal, but you could still play. They had a lot of them. So, I think, for a lot of young men that came here without any wives, or single men, in order for recreation or something to do, they would gamble. Some of them were good at it, and some weren't. So I think most of the gaming establishments here in Nevada liked to have the Oriental people come, because most of them are gamblers. Every man likes to gamble, I think, but some people are a lot better. He was fairly proficient with cards, and that's all he ever played was cards, primarily the two games: five-card stud poker, and panguingue. That's the only two card games he played.

*What about your mother? Was she a housewife?*

She was a housewife, yes, and when we had the nursery, she helped with the nursery. I remember, as a child, we had orchards, and we also had gardens, like vegetable gardens. We had a stand in front, so she sold fruits and vegetables there, as well as the nursery. This was when we were first starting in. It wasn't a real lucrative business in those days to have a nursery, but most of the business was gardening. Eventually, the gardening kind of went away, and the nursery became the main part of the business—the nursery and the landscaping. We boys grew up there. I have two brothers, so when we got old enough to work and help, then the business started to expand, because we had some labor, and they could do more work.

*Your father didn't hire any Mexican people or any white people?*

Well, very seldom. During World War II, he brought a *Nisei* family out of one of the camps in Utah to come and work for him, and that was the only help he had until we got old enough, and then that individual eventually started his own gardening business and retired in that business. But then, right after he retired, he passed away, but he did well enough to start his own business and be very successful. But that was the only help he had—permanent help. When we got older, he would hire casual labor. It didn't matter what race; there were all different kinds, and we would hire them for maybe three months when we were really busy, and then we would have a lot of work. Then after that, they would be laid off, and we would continue with just the family.

*You said that you spoke Japanese until your mother passed away. When you were young, did all of your family speak English?*

Both. Mostly English, but some Japanese. As my mother became more proficient in English, she used English more. So we didn't use very much Japanese. She was trying to teach us to read and write in Japanese, but we weren't very good students. [laughter] We always had to do it after school and after work, so it didn't leave much time to really do that, because we still had to do our homework for the regular school. I am kind of regretful now; I wish I had paid more attention. [laughter]

*Do you remember your mother's social life at the time?*

Well, here in Reno, it was different from, say, in the communities in California, where you had a lot of Japanese or a lot of any race; they all kind of stayed together. Here in Reno, there was no Japanese community. There

were probably only six or seven families here altogether. Two of them lived in Sparks, and the rest of them in Reno. We were within a few blocks of each other, but nobody lived very close to each other. There were two families next door to each other. We lived about three blocks away, and there were two families that had farms over here where the fairgrounds are right now, the east end of Sutro Street. There were two truck farms run by Japanese families. We were kind of all over in that section of Reno, but not real close together.

Social life was about once a month. The adults would get together at somebody's house, and a lot of times the kids didn't go; we stayed home. Once in a while, maybe everybody would go. In the summertime, once or twice a year, they'd have a picnic, and that's the only time we ever got to see everybody. Sometimes they'd go visit another family. And that was socializing among the Japanese people. There weren't very many. So everybody knew everybody else, but we didn't do a lot of getting together, because everybody was busy doing their thing.

*What about the social life in terms of being in a small community with people of different races?*

That was not a major problem. The Japanese at that time lived in what now was called the southeast portion of Reno. It was predominantly Italians, a few other Caucasians, and then the few Japanese families. So we all got along very well. Everybody kind of knew each other, and we didn't have any problems until World War II came along. Even then, the problems were not as great as they could have been. It wasn't the Italians—we didn't have any problems with the Italian people. We had some problems with one German family, of all things, one German family. They were on the same side as

the Japanese were in World War II, which was strange. [laughter] Other than that, we were pretty well accepted. We went to school with kids of all races. There were very few blacks in Reno at that time. All the way through school, I only had two black students, two Chinese students, and maybe half a dozen Mexicans in school. As children we intermingled with everybody, and we had no problems, and the adults seemed to do well with the adults of whoever was in the neighborhood.

See, I was born over there; I was born in the house right across from where the fairgrounds are right now. Then, in the spring of 1941, we moved over to the south side of the river, and then we were totally away from whatever Japanese people there were. We were in a different neighborhood, but here, again, it was predominantly Italians and then a few other Caucasians. Then, eventually, there was one black family that moved in. We all got along very well, and even the adults had no problems; everybody visited with everyone. The neighborhood was fairly well mixed, racially. Maybe that's why.

The other thing was not having whole groups of the same race living together. Like even the Mexican people that were here were spread out. So you had no colonies, except the Chinese had a community and a Joss House right on First and Lake Street in those days. They were the only ones who really had any kind of a community. Everyone else was pretty well integrated into these neighborhoods, so the only place you didn't find any Japanese was in the southwest which is where the well-to-do people lived, and it was all Caucasian people there, but those were all of our customers, my father's customers.

The bulk of his business came from there, and we took care of all these yards of all the influential people in town. So my father was well known to all of these people. We had no

integration problems in those days that I can recall, except during the war. It wasn't as bad, I guess, as some people had it, because we didn't get relocated, for one thing. There were some incidents, but nothing that was really that bad.

*What kind of community activities did you have before World War II? Also, could you tell me more about the incident during World War II?*

OK. Community activities—there really weren't many. Everybody kind of did their own thing. As far as I know, most of the Japanese didn't belong to any fraternal groups; they weren't allowed to. There were two laws that affected the Japanese: one was against mixed marriages, and the other was that the Orientals could not own property before the war. Those were the worst two. There were some unwritten regulations, you might say, in some of these fraternal groups. They, especially, did not allow people other than the white race to belong, whether it was a service club or the Elks or any of those. They just kind of had unwritten rules. So it wasn't until after the war, when some of these things changed, that the Japanese were allowed to join some of these organizations. As far as I can recall, nobody belonged to any social groups. Let's see, in the summer they used to have our annual picnic get together. Then the Japanese-American Citizenship League started in 1946, and they kind of pulled everybody together on an annual picnic and then a couple of other events through the year. That was primarily most of the social get-together, except for family groups that would want to do that, or friends.

We used to go to ball games, and then we participated in sports of some kind. When I was coming up through school I would go to the social events. There was nothing against

me going, but it wasn't always easy to get a date, either. There were no Japanese girls my age here. I was in-between. I was one of the younger *Nisei*. The other ones all served in World War II, but I was too young, and with very few families here, there were hardly any girls here. My sister was the only one, and the other families that had girls were all older, all my sister's age. They were older, so that was that.

I never thought of myself as being Japanese when I grew up, because I grew up here. Except for World War II, it never dawned on me that I was different. Even when I looked in the mirror and combed my hair, I never thought I looked any different. I didn't think about that, because it wasn't an issue with the kids—the kids that we ran around with and went to school with. And during World War II it wasn't. It became apparent, but it was not a real stumbling block as far as that's concerned. It was another obstacle you had to overcome. It was just like going to school and passing courses and doing things that your parents wanted you to do.

Socially, it was a different era from the years that *you* are growing up in. The kids didn't mature as early. So girls were not important until you probably became a senior in high school, or maybe even going to college. There were other things. You had to work, and then there was always sports and hunting and fishing, other activities that were more important than girls. It just wasn't a major issue like it is today. Today, a lot of the younger kids in middle school even, eleven, twelve, it's important to have contact with the opposite sex. In our day, it wasn't that big an issue. Kids dated and so on, but you're always going to have some that that was an important issue. For the bulk, I would say, it really wasn't until maybe when you became a senior. Then I went to college. Then, all of a sudden, the



social life became a focal point in college. Up until then, there were too many other things to do that occupied the time. Also, my parents didn't encourage that; they had never attended any functions and so on.

It wasn't until my youngest brother came along that some of these things became important. With my dad, it was always, "You have to work, work, work."

So when my youngest brother got to high school, my other brother and I got together and went to my dad and said, "Somebody in this family has to have a chance to do some of these things, and he is bigger than we are, so he should get a chance to play football and basketball and so on."

"So that's fine," my dad said. "OK."

We said, "We'll do all the work, if you let him participate."

So he said, "OK. We can do that, but two requisites: one, he has to maintain a B average."

I said, "Well, that shouldn't be any problem."

"And the other one is that he has to make first string. You know, he has to be on our first team."

"Well, OK." [laughter]

So, fortunately, he did both. We could keep after him for his grades, and then he was talented enough to do that, and he went on in high school to become All-State and become All-Star, and then when he went to the university, he made All-American, so he was talented enough to do that. I'm glad he had the chance to do that. Then, he subsequently went on to a very successful career as a teacher and a coach. So it was something that my other brother and I could say, "Well, yes, we got him started that way." But he had a lot of talent, and it was kind of a shame to waste that. As he came along, he became more socially active, because he

didn't have to work like we did. So his life was different from ours in that respect.

*How much older than your brothers are you?*

Well, my brother George is two years younger than me, and then Ken is two years younger than George, so he's four years younger than me, but I'm glad he had the chance, because it was an opportunity for somebody in the Japanese race. Before him there was one other. In those days, Reno High School was the only high school here, and in Sparks they had a high school, and then the Catholic school was Bishop Manogue. Those were the only high schools. There were no other high schools in those days. When I went to school there was a Tarenishi family, and one of their boys was a basketball player, and there was another family here, and one of their boys was a football player, but he was never big. They did well, but they didn't attain the status my brother achieved in athletics. He was bigger than either one of those two fellows. Most boys want to become athletes, star athletes, but most of us are never going to make that. Anyway, that's how things evolved, as far as most of the social life.

There were incidents in World War II. There's one I remember. There were two brothers, when I was in grammar school, that I always had to fight every day, or run home every day, because there was always two of them against me, and they were both a little bigger than me. If there'd only been one, I might have been able to do something, but with two, I could never beat both of them. So I used to come home crying, because I got beat up. My father would always say, "That's OK. You need to do what you do. Well, use an equalizer. Get a two by four or something."

And I said, "Well, I can't do that." So I fought them for a long time. If I could get a



head start, I could outrun them, if I could get away. They didn't live where I lived, so they never chased me too far.

When I got to junior high school, I was accepted by the inner group of students that seemed to be the big social group, as well as the athletes. When they found out that these brothers were still harassing me, one day after school there were about fifteen of them. They caught these two brothers, and I never heard from those two brothers again. I never asked what happened. All I know is, I never got bothered by those guys again, and I was well treated by all the students in the school, and most of the teachers.

In our neighborhood, there was this one German family; they would throw rocks over at the house. They broke a window, and they'd go by and throw all kinds of things at the house, and they'd paint things on the sidewalk. We knew it was them, but nobody else was doing this kind of stuff.

The only other bad thing about World War II was that, right after it broke out, the sheriff came and took my father to jail, and they kept him there for about three months. I remember going to visit him in jail, and I couldn't understand why he was in jail, because I knew he hadn't done anything. They also took a lot of the other heads of households, but most of them didn't get detained. They were taken in.

The FBI came to the house every week and looked through the house every week. We got to know them pretty well. They got to know how we were doing in school and everything, because they could see the papers [our tests and homework]. They were always looking for hidden radios, and we had the old Philco radio, like most families did, and that's all we had. So it wasn't a two-way radio or anything. However, my father had firearms, because he liked to hunt, so they took all his guns away, and that may have been one reason why they

arrested him, but I guess they just thought he was a spy. [laughter] Anyway, those were some of the worst things that happened.

There were a lot of things said from time to time, if you went downtown and went to the store. Even at school, a couple of the students would say something, but most of them didn't say anything. It was not a major issue. A couple of the teachers, maybe initially, treated me a little differently—nothing real bad, but I've had a couple of them tell me, years and years later, that they didn't like me when the war first broke out, just because I was Japanese. They thought I was going to be the enemy.

One of the things my father impressed upon us was that you *must* do well in school, I think. Most *Niseis* told their kids, "You must do well in school; you must get the education, or you cannot succeed in this country." So my sister was a straight-A student, which made it hard for me, because I couldn't match her. I was not an A-plus student. I was a B-plus student. She only brought home one B all the way through school. I remember my dad really got after her about that. I was allowed to bring home more than one B. I was a B-plus, A-minus student, but I had to work hard to do that. I think the teachers respected that, because, as I said, a couple of them in later years told me that they respected me, because I was such a good student and never created a problem in class—good student scholastically and otherwise.

When I was in seventh grade in junior high school (junior high was seventh, eighth, and ninth grades), I won the spelling championship. I beat everybody in the school. I remember the word I won on was "dessert." There was this ninth grade girl that missed "dessert," and when she missed it, I knew I had it, because I knew how to spell dessert. [laughter] That was, maybe, the crowning achievement of my junior-high-school days.

But those are the kinds of things I remember. Like I just knew I had to do well and not create any problems in class. I had some good teachers there. So I worked hard there, and I think that changed some of their attitudes about the Japanese-Americans. They said it certainly changed theirs about any of the minorities, primarily, but the Orientals, because there was another Chinese fellow in class that was absolutely brilliant. He later went on to become a nuclear physicist, and he was kind of my ideal. He always was a straight-A student, but he was a regular guy. His family had a restaurant here, and they all worked in the restaurant. It was just like our family; we all worked at the nursery. So we were kind of the same, and we got along very well, and yet, you know, the Chinese and the Japanese normally didn't get along that well. But we did, and their family and our family got along. We used to go there and eat about once a month. It taught me how to get along with people.

I think the war helped me more than it helped some other people, because it taught me more tolerance than I think I might otherwise have had. I knew that everybody in California was relocated, and you know some of the friends of the family got relocated. I was expecting us to be gone someplace, too, but it didn't happen, and that was fortunate for us, I think. My dad might have been kind of hard-headed. He's very—oh what do I say? Individualistic. He's always made his own way. He left Japan when he was about thirteen years old, and made his own way to the United States, and he's always kind of done things the way he wanted to do them, so he wouldn't have liked being pulled up and put in a camp, and he didn't like being put in jail, but after he got out, he didn't break any laws. Well, one time he did. He borrowed a shotgun, and he went duck hunting. And he

got caught. [laughter] But that's how much he liked to go hunting, and he kind of instilled that in us boys, so we go hunting and fishing and outdoors and so on.

One of the things I didn't tell you about my father was that during the Depression he worked in a CCC Camp, a Civilian Conservation Corps Camp. They put windmills in across all of northern Nevada and part of northern California, as part of this government project—windmills, so that there would be water for cattle and the game. He was the cook on this crew that went across most of northern Nevada. That's how he got to know all of that country and where to go hunting and so on. That's what he did, you know, during the Depression when there really wasn't anything else to do. He went to work for the government doing that. He was also a cook. He was a good enough cook to be a chef someplace probably, but I don't know where he picked up the skill. He never talked about it.

*During the Depression did he do his gardening job?*

Gardening? There was no money to do that. You had to spend money on that, so he went to work for the government on this government project with the Conservation Corps.

*Where did he get the job as a labor worker?*

I couldn't tell you. Probably, I think, people were taking anything they could get in those days.

*Tell me about your education.*

Well, I went to school in Reno, two different grammar schools, because we

moved, and then junior high school, and then Reno High School, and every school that I went to is gone now. The buildings are all gone. They've done something else there. I went to the University of Nevada, got a scholarship to go to the University of Nevada, thanks to one of my teachers. I was going to go anyway, but she said, "No, your grades are good enough and everything that you could get a scholarship. It is kind of late," she said, "but we'll apply." Luckily, I was able to get a scholarship to go.

I started out in the College of Agriculture to get a degree in horticulture, which was the closest thing to the nursery business. Well, as a sophomore, I was the only student in the entire curriculum, so they dropped it, and I had to change majors and colleges. I lost most of those credits I already had accumulated. They didn't count when I went to the College of Arts and Science. So I then went and got the degree in botany, and it took me six years, because I lost those first two years. So I had to start all over. [laughter] I did get my degree, a bachelor of science. I wanted to go back and get a master's. Originally, I wanted to become a college professor and teach, but then I had to go back, and my mother passed away when I was a sophomore in college, and that's another reason it took me six years. I didn't take a full load every semester, so that I could work, and eventually, after I graduated, I went back to the nursery full time, so I never went back to school. Then my brother left there and branched out and came to work for accounting. It was almost twenty-five years ago. But all my education has been here in the local school system.

The University of Nevada was the only system of higher education in the state at that time. There was no Las Vegas, so everybody came to school here, and it was a small school, and you knew almost everybody

here. People came from all over the state, and really all over the country. I went to school with people from Massachusetts and some from down South and upper Midwest and all over the West Coast. So I got to know quite a few.

Also, at that time, we had GI's coming back from Korea, and there again, I lucked out. I was taking ROTC, because I thought if I went in the military, I'd want to go in as an officer, rather than as an enlisted man, but, here again, when I was a sophomore, I got polio, so I had to drop out, and once I did that I got a draft notice. When I went down to take the physical I was 4-F, so I didn't pass. So I didn't have to go into the military, which is a disappointment for a young man of nineteen years of age, because everybody else was going. The big thing to do is to go with everybody—all your friends. I was able to complete my education, but while I was home, these people were coming back from Korea. The GI's were older people with families, and I got to meet them, and they really stimulated me to continue my education. I was getting kind of burned out there, because of having to start over. It was kind of wearing me down, but when I saw married people going to class, supporting families and working and everything else, I thought, if they can do that, I can go to school. In talking to them, too, and making friends with those people, I learned that over there (in Korea) they saw their friends die, and things like this. They said nothing was more important than living, but once you got through that, then education became important, because you couldn't succeed without it. With the government paying the GI Bill, why, they were going to take advantage of it.

*After your mother died, did your father continue his business?*

Yes, he kept the business going. I had to cut down on my load in school, so I could help, but I still went to school, and I worked, and my brother got out of high school, so he was home to help. Then he went into the military—he was drafted—so he was gone for two years. Then my younger brother was still home, so we kept the business going, and it was just one of those things, where everybody shares everything. I became kind of the chief cook and bottle washer. My dad did some of the cooking; I did some of the cooking, and I did most of the housework. I got my brothers to help clean the house. I did the washing and the ironing. I learned how to do that. [laughter] I learned how to keep house. I didn't think it was very good then, but it was an invaluable experience after I got married. I knew how to do housework and how important it is and what a drudgery it can be sometimes, if you have to do all of it.

So I kept the business going. In fact, the business grew, because everything just grew. Reno was growing, and there were other businesses starting up at that time, but because we were here, and we had a well-established name, we had a lot of business, more than we could handle. It just kind of grew up, and we did well. My father did well. [laughter] We weren't getting very much out of it, because he wasn't paying us that much, but he was doing well, and after I got out of school and came back full time, why, we went along pretty well for a while, but he didn't want to change the deal of the old school. He didn't want to change the way operations went, and he had to change, or he couldn't keep up. There were a lot of changes occurring in the business itself, and I could see that we could not support three families in there the way he was operating it. So my brother and I had a long discussion, and we decided we would leave, because there was enough for

him, with the hired help, that he could do well. So we left, and he stayed in there until he was eighty years of age and finally retired at eighty. He did pretty well just selling retail there, and not doing any more landscaping. The opportunity was there, I think, to have a tremendous business, but it didn't work out.

When we left we talked about, well, maybe we should go into business, but we didn't want to compete with him, and he wouldn't have looked at it right. It would have been like we were trying to cut his throat type of thing; we were in competition. So we didn't want to do that, and so for a year I went to work for a friend of mine who was an engineer, and I worked on a survey crew. Then I came to work for the county.

If you look back at the business, those people that were in business then, everyone of them got real big, did very well, because the town just mushroomed, and so there was a lot of need for nursery and landscaping—and gardening, for that matter. Now there are a lot of gardeners here, so all those businesses did very well. That's the way it is, but then I wouldn't be where I am today, either. [laughter] Who knows what I would have been doing?

I've been here for almost twenty-five years and have kind of come up through the ranks to become the head of the department and become part of the county's management team. So I am doing things that impact the entire community now, more so than I would have been, had I stayed in business. It's kind of rewarding to work here and to work in government. I know we have a lot of shortcomings. There's a lot of improvements that have to be made, but there are also a lot of good things going on. Mostly, you don't read about those in the papers or on television. They never tell you about those good things. Good things are not news. [laughter]

So that's the way things have happened here. I think it's all been for very good, because all of us have done reasonably well, and I think most of the Japanese in this community have done very well. They all have a very good reputation here of being very productive, very ambitious, and people who can get things done. You never have to worry about them. Give them an assignment to do, and they are going to get the job done, and I think that's just the reputation of the Japanese people: they are hard-working and honest and ambitious, and they will always give you what you need or what you want. So I've tried not to diminish that reputation at all.

My father had a good name here, and I want to make sure that his name stays real well. He was well known, well respected in the community. All of his friends are gone. Most of the influential people that knew him are gone, or they've all passed on. He's outlived them all. Independent as he is, you know he's very cantankerous now, like old people get. [laughter] And he doesn't want to talk to anybody.

*So he's alone at his house?*

Yes. My nephew stays with him.

*Your wife is Japanese?*

No. My wife is a Caucasian.

*So when you reached the age to get married that law against interracial marriage was no longer in force?*

No, that law had been repealed back in about 1958, so it was not illegal to have an interracial marriage, and so I got married in 1960. All these years, I'd been going to school and working, so when I finally graduated from

college, I didn't want to get married right away. There were too many other things that I wanted to do. So for two or three years I did some of the things I had always wanted to do. I traveled around, and I still worked, but I went to some of these different places, and just did a few things that I thought you could not do once you got married. I really wasn't ready to get married when I got married. [laughter] It was one of those things that happens, and all my life I dated Caucasian girls; there were no Japanese girls.

When I went to the University of Nevada, there was one Japanese girl there from Fallon. She was a senior, and I was a freshman. Well, a senior can't go with a freshman. [laughter] We became good friends, and she's a beautiful girl from a really nice family in Fallon, and we knew the family. But there just weren't any Japanese girls around. I just always dated and ran around with Caucasian girls—just one of those things.

So when I was about twenty-one, I was still in college. "Gee, I better go and see if I can find any Japanese girls." My sister was living in Sacramento, so I would go down there and stay with her, and I'd run around in the Japanese community and try to meet Japanese girls. I met quite a few of them through there and through the Japanese-American Citizen League, but I never really met any I wanted to marry. [laughter] They thought differently from me.

Well, even a lot of people that lived in the Japanese communities had a feeling of persecution, because when you live in a group, people can see you, and they see you as a group, and tend to tabulate everybody as the same. So a lot of them felt persecuted. Most of us that lived here never had those feelings, because we were accepted here. They didn't feel like they were accepted. So when they'd be talking about prejudice and discrimination,



that was real for them. We didn't have that here. I don't know what you faced here, but I think even people that were coming from Japan didn't feel it here. In Sacramento they did, because they lived in a community, and the same with the black and Mexican or whatever they were, Puerto Ricans. Everybody was prejudiced against everybody. When you got a lot more people . . . now those communities get big enough where you are getting that here. Now, you've got the black community and the Mexican community and whatever, and there's problems, and so people are starting to feel prejudiced. They are starting to discriminate against these people, just because of the problems that are created.

I didn't have any of that, and so when I dated Japanese girls, I tried to see if there was any difference. My dad wanted me to marry a Japanese girl, and I thought, well, being a good son, I will see what I can do. [laughter] But living there was different, because I was from the outside; I didn't get accepted, and that was a real problem. I was dating this girl when I met my wife. What started out as a friendship just kind of mushroomed into something else, and pretty soon this other girl, who was over the mountain, tended to become less important. [laughter]

So we got married, and we've been married for thirty-two years and have two daughters. And going on. We just keep going from year to year, and when we reach forty or fifty or whatever . . . Good friends of ours just celebrated their fiftieth anniversary, so . . . My brother has been married for thirty-three years, and my youngest brother has been married for thirty years. So we only picked one, and we are all married to Caucasians.

*What about your sister?*

My sister married a Japanese from Sacramento, and they moved over there, and they have four children. Her husband passed away here two years ago, and so she is a widow.

*Do you remember what kind of Japanese traditions, food, activities, you had in the house when you were young?*

Clothing, we wore all American clothes. Food, we usually had one Japanese meal a day. Generally, at dinnertime we had a Japanese meal. Breakfast was always an American meal, and lunch could be sandwiches or anything. Sometimes on a weekend my mother might have made something for lunch, but generally, we had about one Japanese meal; that's all. I still like to have the Japanese food. My wife has gotten the same way. Like rice was bread to me, so I still like to have rice and some of these other dishes. I still like *sashimi* and some of those things, so I try to remember some of the things my mother used to make, and I tried to teach my wife how to cook some of these things, and she's done very well. She can make most of these things now. So we eat a fair amount of Japanese food as a regular part of our diet, because we are on low-fat, low-cholesterol diet, and a lot of that food fits right in. So it's real good.

Culture-wise, some of the things that they wanted to instill in us were honesty, integrity, and their dedication to hard work. Most of the things that are very important to the Japanese, all those things, I think, were instilled in us to do these: to do what's right, to work hard, and duty to family, although my father was never one to do much with the family. Yet, he still tried to instill in us that you have a sense of family as being number one in your life, but he never really said a lot about it. He was very dictatorial in the way he raised the family

himself. Everything always had to be his way, I guess, more of the old Japanese ways.

All of our friends were from the American families, and I could see how they did things. I got invited to these homes a lot. When you were at the dinner table, you'd have discussions. Well, we didn't do that at our house. No talking at the table. You just came to eat, and that's all. If any talking were to be done, my dad did the talking.

So I didn't like that, when I could see what happened in American families, and that the father and the mother would go to activities with the kids. Well, my dad never did that. One, he was always busy, but still, I could see these other people were busy, too, but they made time to do that. And then we worked seven days a week; these other people would work five days or six days. They'd always take a day off. In my family it was different—treating your kids a little differently from the time they were small children all the way up. So I wanted to try to do that, because my father was always, “Do everything just as I tell you to do it.” And like most kids, you don't always agree with that. [laughter]

So with my kids I tried to do differently. I guess it worked in most ways, because we get along very well, and I think that's important. They are not as afraid of me as I was of my father, I think, and I think my brothers or sister feel the same way. They were just scared to death of him. You weren't afraid of your mother, but you were afraid of your father. In our system, it's the other way around: more afraid of the mother than the father. [laughter] So I think that's one of the big changes that have occurred.

But at the same time, I tried to instill in my kids some of the old virtues. Well, they're not strictly Japanese, but work hard, be honest, treat people right. Certainly, you're going to have some prejudices, not only against people,

but against systems and everything else, but you need to try to always look at both sides on a lot of these things, so that they are aware of that, and hopefully they will pass it along to their children. So I think some of the Japanese way of doing things is passed on, and you take pride in yourself, because if you don't have that, you can't accomplish a lot. So be aware of yourself and try to make things work within the society you're in, as well as fit in. You don't have to be a sheep, and you don't have to be one of the flock; you can still be an individual.

There were no churches here, so, although I know both of my parents were Buddhists, maybe, when they came over from Japan, they never went to church here, because there wasn't a church. They still don't have a Buddhist church here, so you were never able to follow that religion. My sister and I never went to Sunday school, but my brothers went to Sunday school, different ones, but they've never gone to church, either. My wife was a Catholic, and when the children were small, she'd take them to church, and they were raised as Catholics, but they don't go to church any more, either, because they don't agree with everything about the Catholic Church. We told them you just need to go, so you can learn what it's about, and if you don't like it afterwards, you don't have to go. They had friends who were Mormons, so they went with their friends to their church and the Baptist Church, so they got exposed to all the different religions. Basically, they could see and make up their own minds. Neither one of the girls really goes to church as something that they have to do. So we didn't have a real religious background, because my dad really never said anything about it, but if my brothers friends were going to go to Sunday school, if they wanted to go, they were allowed to go. None of my friends ever wanted to go to Sunday school so we didn't go. [laughter]

*In Japan, New Year's Day is really important, like a big ceremony at Christmas here. Did your family celebrate New Year's Day?*

We did that when my mother was alive. She always made the big thing on the table, all the different foods, and then we went visiting all the other families, and everybody visited everybody. So I remember on New Year's, it was a very festive occasion. Even after my mother died, some of the other families would have us, so we'd would go visit them, and then we had some friends in California, and they would do the same thing. Some friends had a nursery down there, and we boys used to go down and help them in the winter times, right around New Year's, because we weren't doing anything here, but they were getting ready down there, so I remember they would put this big New Year's feast on. That's one thing that my mother did every year when she was alive, and when she passed away, my dad didn't do that anymore, and that's the only time that I can remember that we'd have to have saké. [laughter] I didn't like it when I was a little kid, but you had to drink it.

Yes, we didn't follow large Japanese traditions in our house. So we did everything like they did it here. My dad didn't even celebrate Christmas, either. My mother would celebrate Christmas, because it was something that all the kids did. [laughter] So she would help us celebrate Christmas, although it really wasn't a big thing in our house, either, but it's a big thing in my house, because Christmas is very important to my wife. So it's always a big holiday in our house—and Thanksgiving. Most of the other things, we didn't do a lot of those things.

There are very few Japanese things in the house. We had a couple of happy faces; my dad still has those. Let's see, we had another picture, and my mother had a couple of

things, but that was it. We didn't have a little altar or anything there for religious service. We didn't even have any samurai swords for a long time, or anything like that. My dad just said we won't have any of that stuff. I can remember even when we were little kids before the war, they didn't even have a picture of the emperor up or anything. I know a lot of houses displayed an old Japanese flag and a picture of the emperor, but we didn't have that. When the war started my mother put up an American flag, and the FBI guys, the first time they came, I remember they were amazed to see an American flag in our house instead of a Japanese flag, because they took those things away from everybody. I think it was a lot my dad, because he said, "We won't have any of that in the house." So there wasn't any. I remember our mother trying to teach us to count in Japanese, and trying to teach us to read and write, and that's about all we did, not much beyond that. We didn't talk about anybody in the relatives in Japan, or anywhere for that matter. It was just like we were a family all by ourselves, and we didn't have anybody else.

*Even on your mother's side? She never contacted her family?*

Well, she did, but she wasn't allowed to talk about it. She'd write to them, and she would get responses, but it's all in Japanese, so I can't read it; nobody can read it. She passed away in 1952, and so that contact was lost, because of not knowing who these people were, and not being able to read anything. Nothing was kept; my dad got rid of everything after she passed away. We were pretty naive and dumb. If I had known then what I know now, I would have kept her things, but he didn't want to keep it, so he got rid of it all. There were some old pictures that are still there, but I don't know



who they are. I don't even know who these people are, from Japan. Oh, maybe when my sister-in-law finds out more stuff, we can find who some of these people are. A lot of them have probably passed away now, but maybe we can find the children or something—cousins or whatever.

*Thank you very much for answering my questions.*

Well, I probably rambled on more than I should have.

*That was great.*



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HENRY HATTORI

*Noriko Kunitomi: Today is September 23, 1992. I'm interviewing Mr. Henry Hattori today at his house in Sparks, Nevada. The interview will be about his ancestors' decision to come to the United States, and life in Nevada. Mr. Hattori, does the University of Nevada Oral History Program have your permission to make available to the public the tapes and transcripts of this interview?*

Henry Hattori: Yes, I agree.

*First of all, tell me when you or your family first came to the United States.*

Well, my parents came right at the turn of the century, but, of course, my sister and brother and I were born here in California.

*When did you arrive in Nevada?*

I came to Nevada right after I finished school in October of 1940, and I came to Yerington.

*Could you tell me where in Japan your parents came from?*

From Kushu. Nagaoka.

*Do you remember why your parents needed to come to the United States?*

No, they never did tell us exactly what, except that, I guess, living was very difficult. They were farm people, and so it was hard in Japan. So they thought they might come to the United States. Well, my father first came, and then my mother came later.

*Did they marry before they came here?*

Yes, they did. However, my father had been here awhile before he went back to Japan and married my mother and came back here. My father was born in Nagaoka Ken.

*Do you know when he came here?*

He arrived in 1900. He came to the United States from Japan in 1900.

*What did you and your family do for living in California and Nevada?*

Well, see, when my father first came over by himself, he worked on the railroad in Montana. Then, after he came back with my mother, they farmed in California near Stockton and raised potatoes and onions.

*Has your father told you what he did in railroad work?*

Well, he was just a day laborer, so no particular job, I assume, just laying tracks and things like that.

*Did he tell about his motive or purpose, or why he came to work on the railroad?*

Well, when they first came here, of course, he didn't speak any English at all, and they were, I guess, hiring a lot of Orientals to work on the railroad—just installing the railroad, not as conductors or engineers or anything like that—and so he got in on that, started to work.

*What did you do for a living in Nevada?*

First, I came here, and I was working in a laundry. See, I already had my degree in Colorado. I was brought up in Colorado, and I was going to teach school, but when I came to Nevada, they said, well, as long as I'm 1-A in the draft, they can't hire me as a teacher. So I worked in the laundry for a while, and then I went into the service. At that time, you needed to serve one year, and then you finished your obligation. So that's what I was going to do—finish my one year—and then I could come back and teach in Yerington, but the war broke out in the meantime, and I was in the army for over four years.

*So, since you were in military service, you didn't have to go to the [relocation] camp?*

No. I didn't. The people that were living in Nevada did not have to go to camp, even if they weren't in the service. It was just California. The border is right ten miles or so from here.

*What about your parents at the time?*

Well, my parents were in Japan. My father had become ill, and he wanted to go back to Japan. So my mother and my brother and sister took him back to Japan in 1939, but I was finishing school in Colorado, so I didn't go.

*Did your parents come back to the United States later?*

Well, my mother came back, and my sister and brother are both back. My mother died in the 1960s. But my brother and sister are still living.

*Why did you come to Nevada?*

Well, my cousin lived in Yerington. In a way, it was supposed to be a stop on my way to Japan. I was going to go to Japan, too, but my brother kept writing to me not to come. He said there was trouble brewing, so he advised that I not go to Japan. So I stayed in Yerington there.

*So you said that your cousin was in Yerington?*

Yes. My cousin was in Yerington operating a laundry and dry cleaners.

*So you helped him?*

Yes, so I helped him there.

*Do you know why your cousin came here?*

Oh, I'm not sure why he came, but most of the people at that time were coming here, hoping to make money. They had, I suspect, no intention of staying here permanently, but so many of them *did* stay.

*So just like the Chinese, who came here and made money and then went home, the Japanese people also wanted to do that?*

That's what they wanted to do at first, but I guess it wasn't all that easy. So in a way they got stuck here, but I think a lot of them got so they liked it here.

*How did your parents come here? Did they come by boat?*

Oh, yes. I'm sure that was the *only* transportation available at that time.

*Japanese ship?*

Yes, Japanese ship. They went back on a Japanese ship, too. Yes, I saw them off in San Francisco.

*Do you know how long it took?*

No, afraid not! [laughter] It must have taken quite a while.

*When your parents came over, do you know why they chose California—to make a living there?*

Well, there were more Japanese in California, and they had people that would advise them what to do and so forth. They were totally unaware of the rest of the country, I'm sure. Of course, in 1926—I think that's the

year—my father decided he wanted to go to Colorado. He had heard that there was good farming land. So he moved to Colorado. I was six years old then. So I was actually brought up in Colorado.

*So have you worked for the railroad, or just your father worked for the railroad?*

Oh, he just worked for the railroad for, well, a rather short time, because after my mother came, they farmed. So ever since then, until they went back, we worked on the farm.

*So none of your family members worked for the railroad, except for your father?*

Just for a while. Yes. Day labor type.

*Your father had made friends, and I'm interested to know what kind of life, what kind of living conditions he had while he was working on the railroad?*

He didn't tell us, and I don't know. I have no idea.

*I'm interested in the ways of the Japanese Nisei and Sansei. That's a continuation with our generation. I wonder how they were able to adjust themselves and fit in with the small Nevada community.*

Well, when I came to Nevada, what surprised me, was that in almost every little town in Nevada there was a Japanese laundry and dry cleaning. Like there was in Ely, Elko, Wells, Winnemucca, Carson City, Gardnerville, Reno, Yerington. They all had Japanese people operating laundries. There were some that were farming, but outside of that, at that time, these were the *Nisei*. They were not in any other business or occupation,

as far as I recall. Then the *Nisei*, the second generation, most of them went to school, and after they finished school, they got out of the laundry and dry cleaning business and went to work just like anybody else—worked in, well, school districts or counties. Like here, Buddy, for instance, is the Director of General Services for Washoe County, and George Oshima used to be the engineer for Washoe County. Fred Aoyama used to operate a service station. So there was just any number of things that people did. You know, they varied.

When I first came back to Reno, I worked for the Internal Revenue Service, for the federal government. From there I went to work for the University of Nevada. That was in 1956. Then my two boys went through the grammar school and high school here, and then they went through the university. They both went to graduate school. Eugene got his doctorate at Washington State, and the younger one got his master's degree at Princeton. So you see, everybody seemed to have different occupations. So there's no pattern in any way. They intermingled with the general population like anyone else. They had no problems.

*From your story, I do not see any prejudice or anything, but did you experience prejudice here?*

No, not greatly here. Surprisingly, out here there was very little prejudice. Now, when I was in San Francisco, I felt some prejudice. See, after I got out of the army, I went back to school in San Francisco to get my degree in accounting, and there I did feel some prejudice. When I went to apply for jobs and things, I could feel the prejudice, but here in Nevada, I certainly didn't. So I think it was the same for my family, my children. My wife works now; she still works.

*So what about before the World War II, like when you were born in California, and also when you grew up in Colorado, did you experience prejudice?*

Very little. In Colorado there were very few Japanese families. Like in the little farming area that we were in, I imagine there must have been ten or twelve families, and that's all. So we got along very well with the general population. As I recall, we all did well in school, and all the *Nisei* children did well. I guess some of them did go back into farming, but I imagine most of them went into other occupations.

*I want to know more about what you can recall about your everyday life, for example, the relationship with your customers, or the relationship with your mates or peers in the military.*

Well, in the military, if you'll recall, we had an all- *Nisei* unit. Well, quite a number of officers were Caucasian, but the non-commissioned officers on down to the privates and so forth were all of Japanese descent, and a large number of them were from Hawaii. Now, while we were in the army, there were, I'm sure, many instances of prejudice, but you could expect that, because we were at war with Japan.

*Did you feel some weird feeling, strange feeling, against Japan, your own country?*

Well, I wasn't familiar with Japan, you see. We were brought up in the United States. See, like in some of these cities, like San Francisco or Sacramento, where they had large Japanese populations, they would have Japanese schools and things like that, where they probably got indoctrinated with Japanese ideas, but where we were so removed, we

didn't have things like that. We just went to the regular public schools. So we didn't experience much Japanese culture, you know, very little. I just don't even recall instances of prejudice, but I'm sure there would be. I don't recall my children complaining about that while they were going to school or working here. Of course, both did pretty well in school. So I'm sure some people did, but I suppose it works both ways. I don't know what to say. If you just carry on and act just like anyone else, why, I would think that the prejudice would be negligible, if any, and that's the way most of the people here in Nevada were, because there were so few Japanese in Nevada, and in Colorado, too.

Of course, up in Denver and Brighton up that way, there were more Japanese. Before we lived in southern Colorado; there were very few. Now, like in Yerington, why, there were three families, that's all, and there was just no problem; they didn't encounter any problems at all. We were able to join any organization. My cousin was in the Rotary Club, and after awhile he was in the VFW and the American Legion, and like that. I'm sure, if I didn't have to go in the army, I would have had a job teaching school in Yerington, but they said they couldn't hire I-A people, because they were subject to the draft.

*Do they still live there down in Yerington?*

In Yerington, as far as I know, there is only one person of Japanese ancestors—just one, who is retired. He is, let's see, my cousin's wife's brother. I met him when he was in the Veterans Hospital here, but I haven't been able to find him since then. We went down there looking for him, but we couldn't find him.

*What about food? Since you were brought up in the United States, you could accept the*

*American food, but since your parents came from Japan, did they want to cook Japanese food?*

Oh, they did. Yes. We were brought up on Japanese food, so to speak. Of course, we also had, in addition, more meat probably than they have in Japan, but we always had rice and vegetables. Well, even now, we eat a lot of rice. [laughter]

*How do they get the materials for cooking Japanese food?*

Well, they had like mail order for fish; they used to get it from San Diego—not San Diego, but just outside of Los Angeles. There were stores in Denver that supplied Japanese food. Like rice, my father would buy it ten sacks at a time, one hundred pound sacks. [laughter]

*So did your family stay in Denver or close to Denver?*

Oh, it's quite a ways from Denver; it's two hundred and fifty miles southwest of Denver, a place called Alamosa. That's where we farmed.

*Do you remember some difficulty working in agriculture?*

Well, yes. We were farming in the 1930s, which was the Depression years here, and it was difficult to make ends meet, but we always managed to get along all right. We went over there in 1926, and then shortly after that, the Depression began, and right up to 1939, when my parents went back to Japan, they weren't good years for agriculture, not the type of farming that we did. So they were hard years, but we always had enough to eat—but not to accumulate any fortune. That's what they were there for, but that wasn't possible.



*Did your family farm just for a living and to supply yourselves?*

Yes, that's about all we were able to do. We were not able to save a lot of money or anything. We were living, you know; living was fine; we had no complaints. We all went to school; we were all well-dressed. [laughter] We had clothing and coats and auto-mobiles and trucks and things like that, but not a great deal extra. Yes, I think all *Niseis* were pretty lucky that we had parents that worked so hard, because we were so much better off than our parents were. We've never had to worry about food or clothing or anything like that. The same way with our children. They certainly don't have to worry about their jobs and things.

*Since you were brought up here, your native language is English, isn't it?*

Sure.

*How could you communicate with your parents?*

Oh, we did learn some Japanese, because, like we were saying, before we went to school, while at home we spoke in *hongone* only. We didn't know English when we were small, and we didn't even know how to use a knife and fork when we were small. It wasn't until after we started to go to school that we picked up all those things like that, and to learn English. Yes, it was strange to me to have to use the knife and fork instead of chopsticks and china, you know. [laughter] But when you are young, you learn quickly.

*So, can you still use chopsticks?*

Oh, sure, we still use chopsticks. [laughter] We don't use it as a regular utensil to eat dinner

or anything, but we use it a lot. Especially, for a thing like cooking, but not when we set the table. Then, we don't use chopsticks.

*How did you farm? Did you use plows?*

Oh, yes. See, the farm that we were on most of the time that I was growing up was fairly large. It was three hundred and twenty acres, which is a half section of land. So we had tractors; we had horses, trucks, a lot of equipment to farm that large a farm. We had like a hundred acres of cabbage. Now that's a lot of cabbage. [laughter] And thirty or forty acres of cauliflower, which is an awful lot of work, because it's so much handwork, and things like lettuce and spinach and beans, potatoes, which we had to harvest almost solely by hand. It wasn't very mechanized those days, not like it is now. Also, the farms were relatively small. Like now, you go out to where they are raising lettuce or cauliflower, broccoli, by the hundreds of acres, and it's all done mechanically. That's not the type of farming we did. We always picked early in the morning and took it to the grocery stores in town and things like that, but most of it was shipped back East. We loaded it into refrigerated cars, train cars, and shipped it back East. Trucks would come in to pick up cabbage and potatoes and things like that.

*So your father made the floor Japanese bath?*

Yes. He made it, and then we'd bring wood, build a fire underneath, and every day, especially in the summer, we'd have to take a bath. [laughter]

*Oh that's neat. I miss Japanese baths.*

They're nice to relax in.



*They make a hot, hot bath. [laughter]*

Yes, it's hot.

*Did you sleep on the floor?*

Oh, no, we never slept on the floor, we always had beds with mattresses.

*Your parents, too?*

Yes. Even my parents.

*So that big house was built special for your family?*

No, no. It was there when we moved into that property. We leased the property to a farm, and the house and the outbuildings like the barn and blacksmith shop, garage, things like that, were all there. The only thing we built on there was houses for our laborers. We used to hire a lot of Mexican people to do the hand labor. Then we built cellars to store the potatoes and things. You dig them in the fall, and there the weather was quite severe, so you couldn't leave them around. You had to put them in under cover. So we built cellars, the kind that you could drive your truck through and move hundreds of sacks and things like that.

*So you and your brother and sister helped with the farming?*

Yes. We helped. Of course, we never missed a day of school because of farming. We always were able to go to school. In the summertime, and after school, and before school.

*So other times did you go to school and come back and help?*

Yes, after school we helped. We only had chores to do. Like my brother and I, one of us would have to milk the cows, and the other one would have to feed the pigs, and we'd take turns. One day one would feed pigs, and one would milk the cows. So we always had milk when we were growing up. Then there were chickens to feed and eggs to collect and things like that. We used to have like a hundred pigs and maybe two cows and a dozen horses, and, oh, I don't know how many chickens we had.

*It must have been noisy. [laughter]*

Yes, they're noisy and dirty. We ate all the eggs.

*What did you use the horses for?*

The type of farming we did was row crops, like cabbage, cauliflower. I don't know whether you have seen them grow or not, but long rows, and then like that. So horses are used to cultivate between the rows of cauliflower, cabbage, or potatoes even, and then to harvest. You couldn't bring in tractors. At that time the tractors were not as well developed as they are now. Only they were like Caterpillar tractors or great big things, so we used horses and wagons. Like potatoes we would dig with a tractor. Then, after they are picked and sorted, then the wagon would go around and pick up the bags of potatoes. So we used the horses quite a bit, not like current farming. [laughter] Nowadays, everything is so mechanized, but it wasn't that way when we were farmers.

*What about winter? Colorado must be really cold?*

Oh, yes, it was very cold. Beginning, oh, the latter part of September, the first part of

October, like now, and from there on, it would get cold, and if it would snow, the snow would stay until next spring. It just wouldn't melt. So when we'd be out milking the cows or feeding the pigs, it could be like thirty to forty below zero. It was very cold there. The altitude was 7,500 feet.

*Oh, it was similar to Lake Tahoe?*

It was higher than Lake Tahoe; even higher than Donner Pass, and that was the floor of the valley that we lived in. So to get out of the valley, you'd have to go like 10,000 feet. That's how high a valley it was, high altitude. It was cold. In the summer time it's cool, too; it would be in the seventies. Sometimes it got in the eighties, and we'd think it was awful hot.

*So what did your family do during winter?*

Well, there's always a lot of things to do on a farm, like repairing equipment, doing things like that. Of course, we didn't, you know, going to school. The days were so short that when we'd leave in the morning it's dark, and when we'd get back it's dark. So we didn't do anything other than our chores of feeding the pigs and milking the cows. [laughter]

*What about your sister? What about her job? Did she help with the farming?*

Well, she did some, but she was mostly helping at home, cooking and keeping house, but she did go out in the field at times, too. At the peak of the cultivating and harvesting, everybody goes out. My mother was out, my father was out, we were all out; everybody's out working, and that's the way it was with all the Japanese families there—ten-hour days.

*Did you feel something different from American families in terms of the gender role?*

Well, the American people did not do the vegetable farming. They were mostly in cattle or grain or hay, which was more mechanized than our row crops. So, in most cases, the father would work with the hired hands, and the mother would stay at home. So it was an entirely different type of farming that they did and what we did. Now, there were some Italian families—like one of our neighbors was Italian—and they did a lot of sugar beets and things, and their parents all went out and worked; all the children were out working. Our fields were adjacent to each other.

*Do you know why your father picked that particular farming style?*

Well, no. I don't know why, but when he was working in California—that's before I was born—he worked for the people that did that type of farming, so he became acquainted with that and learned that type of farming. Otherwise, he wouldn't have known how to farm. So I would suspect that's why he continued with that; it was the only farming he knew.

*Since your father already had the farm areas, and you chose to be a teacher first, are there any conflicts between those decisions?*

No. My mother especially did not want me to become a farmer. In her opinion, it was much too hard work for what you realized, so she wanted me to go college and become a teacher. So that's why I was going to college. They had a small college in the town that was near the place where our farm was; five miles from our farm. So I'd ride the school bus, the regular school bus, and go to school. There

was one other Japanese student at that college, and she was going to become a teacher, too, but when she finished, she got married. [laughter] She did not go into teaching. Her husband was an accountant in Los Angeles, so they moved to Los Angeles then.

*When did you meet your wife?*

That was in Yerington in 1940, 1941, before I went into the army. See, they were living in San Francisco, but in order to avoid the evacuation to the camps, they came to Nevada, and they bought a laundry in Fallon. So they were living in Fallon when I was living in Yerington. So that's how I met her, and, of course, her parents and my cousin were good friends in San Francisco.

*Did you use the railroad to come to Colorado from San Francisco? Or did you use water to travel?*

No, we went in a car, just an ordinary car, and we had our equipment shipped by freight, but we didn't have very much equipment and furniture.

*Are there any reasons why your family chose to use the car instead of the train?*

Well, there were six of us, four children. See, at that time I had an older sister, but she died. I suppose my mother and father thought it would be cheaper by car than for all of us to ride the train. I really don't know; I was only six years old.

*Do you remember what happened on the way to Colorado?*

No, I don't recall that. I don't even recall where we stopped, or anything like that. All I

remember is that it was a long ride. [laughter] In those days the roads weren't that good, and the cars weren't that good. We probably had a few flat tires and things like that on the way.

*Do you remember which car?*

Yes, it was a Buick touring car. I remember that.

*So your father had a driver's license here?*

Oh, sure, if they required them in those days, I don't know. I don't even know that.

*Could you tell me a little bit about the high school or junior high school days?*

Well, first, in the grammar school we had a one-room school house in the country that I attended. Then they got a bus system to go to town, which was only about five miles from our house. So we all rode the bus, but we'd have to get on the bus about seven o'clock in the morning, which in the wintertime seemed quite early. We rode the bus a long time, because we were one of the first ones they picked up. We would ride on until they got everybody picked up and go to school.

I went to junior high and high school in the same building there. When I was in the seventh grade our school building burned down, so all the children got separated into, well, places like the Masonic Lodge. Our classes were at the Masonic Lodge, and the tenth grade was somewhere else, but we were right downtown at the Masonic Lodge. That was only for one year, less than a year. Then the school was rebuilt, so we were able to go back to the regular school.

My brother and I participated in sports. My brother was a real good athlete. He was a football player and a basketball player and a

track man and things like that. I participated, too, but I wasn't very good. [laughter]

Then, after I graduated from high school, I received a scholarship to go to any state university—it was a state scholarship—but we didn't have the resources to go out of town, so I had to stay in Alamoso which had this small teachers college. My graduating class at college had thirty-seven people, so you can see, we had a small school, but there are some advantages to a small school. You get a lot of individual help from the teachers. We had classes in math, for instance, with only six or seven students. So, it was good.

As I mentioned, I was trying to teach there but . . . and I could have got a job; I was offered two jobs to teach, but they didn't pay enough to even make ends meet. See, one job I got offered was fifty dollars a month, and another one was sixty dollars a month, if I would coach athletics, but out of that you had to pay for your room and board, and if you did that, you didn't have enough money.

So I decided I wouldn't teach there. I was fully expecting to go to Japan, because my brother was in school there, and I was going to learn Japanese, so I could get into some kind of business or something, but then, that was shortly before the war, and my brother said definitely do not come, so I didn't go to Japan.

*Could you tell me how much a month you lived on at the time?*

Well, not exactly, but I do recall that at fifty dollars a month, you know, you would have to pay room and board—this was in a small town—of about twenty-five to thirty dollars a month. So that would leave you, maybe, only twenty to twenty-five dollars a month to live off of, well, for clothing and things like that. I didn't think I could do that. One

of my friends, a close friend of mine, took one of these jobs, and he didn't last; I think he lasted about four months. [laughter] He said he couldn't make it. I was quite sure I would be in the same situation. He just retired recently from teaching school. He taught for, oh, something like forty years or something, but he is still living in Denver.

*Did you regret that you couldn't really find a job as a teacher?*

No. At that time I was really interested in teaching, but after I came out of the service I decided that I wasn't going to go into teaching. That's why I went to school in San Francisco to become an accountant. I felt that that was the better occupation, and I think it turned out for the better.

*What did you do at the University of Nevada?*

Oh, you didn't know? [laughter] Well, I was the controller at UNR. The controller has jurisdiction over all the monies that come in. I had to account for all the receipts, the budget, and administer the budget. We'd get the budget, and each department would have so much money to spend, and I would have to watch and see that they didn't spend more, or that they spent the money for what it was allocated, and things like that. At times I had a staff as much as over a hundred employees. That's when I was doing Las Vegas and the community colleges, too, but it got too big, so the University of Nevada, Las Vegas got their own accounting. The community colleges went into two accounting centers—north and south. So Las Vegas took care of the community colleges in the south, and we took care of the community colleges up north. I think they still do that. So it was a responsible position. [laughter] That's what I did.

It was a real pressure-packed type of thing, because, as you can imagine, we were always short of money. Of course, it's worse now. The shortage of money is worse now, but now they have so many more people, more personnel, to do these things than when I was the controller. We had very few people and very few of the higher-educated people and degree people. We had very few. Now they have a lot. They've got more administrators than we had, many more administrators. You see, that's twelve years ago. I left twelve years ago.

*Did you just want to retire?*

Yes, I decided I had better retire, because it was getting too much. I couldn't handle it. I always asked for personnel to help do these things. You don't get the personnel, and then you get criticized for your shortcomings, but you can't handle it. You just can't do everything with the people we had. And then becoming computerized, too—we were always on the very end. We got what was leftover as far as computing was concerned. Now they've got computers on people's desks and things. We didn't have; we had to fight for two o'clock in the morning. [laughter]

Things have changed drastically. Of course, automation has really made a big difference in things like accounting and registration and things. When I first started there, we used to register the students on what we called railroad tickets with a long paper about this wide, and they'd fill in the classes they'd want, and along like that. I don't recall now how many students we had those days; I imagine only about four or five thousand students, but we'd all turn that into what they have now where it's computerized. Computers made a big difference. We didn't have anything on computer when I went

to work there. They would always have computing as more of an educational and research tool than business. We always had to make do with what was leftover time and things like that. It was always annoying to me, because I'd go to the meetings, and I'd visit schools like, oh, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Stanford, Cal, and they'd have such good computer service, and we couldn't get it.

I was glad to get out. [laughter] I was getting ulcers, and my stomach was giving me problems, and I was getting headaches. Amazingly, as soon as I retired, the headaches disappeared. I haven't taken any aspirin anymore, and my stomach was much better. I was glad to retire.

*Health is important.*

Oh, yes.

*I want to know more details about your living arrangements when you lived in Colorado?*

Oh, the living areas? As I mentioned, we had a large house. My wife and I and the children all slept upstairs; it was a two-story building. My parents slept downstairs. There was a kitchen and another room next to the kitchen, which was sort of the pantry, and then there was the living room. Then they had a parlor. The living room and parlor were two separate rooms. Then there was two bedrooms down below; my mother and father slept in one, and there was a guest bedroom. So there was ample space in our house. Then my father built this floor, just sort of an addition to the house on the side, but it had an entry from in the house and also from the outside.

*Did you use tables and chairs?*



Oh, yes, we never did have anything on the floor. No, we had the regular kitchen table and the stove. It was a great big old thing which had water reservoirs and things for hot water. Our running water had no hot water; it was just cold water. So if you wanted hot water, you'd have to go to the stove and either heat it on top or take it out of the reservoirs that were on the end of the stove which had these pipes running through it. As you cooked and things it heated the water in the reservoirs. We used wood and coal. We didn't have gas.

For a long time, for light, we had only kerosene lamps and gasoline lamps. Then, later on we got a light plant, but we did not have power from the Sierra Pacific or anything like that. [laughter] We had a generator, and we made our own electricity. We put generators enough for lighting, not for cooking. Of course, we ran a radio off of it, but that was all.

*What about the clothing? Especially your parents, did they use kimono?*

Oh, no. They never did—just regular Western wear.

*Long skirts?*

Never used kimonos or zotee. [laughter]

*Your mother changed the hair style to Western style, too?*

Well, no. She always had long hair. Everything with my mother was half and half sort of. She understood English fairly well, but she didn't speak well. She didn't read English; my father could read English, and he understood better, but he couldn't speak too well, either. Like his education in Japan was only about the third or fourth grade, and I

don't remember if my mother even went to school in Japan, but she read Japanese—the newspapers and magazines we always had.

*There is usually a kind of conflict between the first generation and the second generation, because of cultural change and also language change. Do you recall some conflicts between your parents and you and your brothers and sister?*

No. Well, after a while going to college, things were a little different. We weren't old enough to know better. [laughter] We always had access to our cars. That's one thing we always had. So school affairs I always went to. When I was in high school I was president of my class, and we'd have functions and meetings and things that I always could attend, and then we'd always have these football and basketball games that we'd always go to. Our parents never objected to our attending things like that.

*Were they Buddhist?*

Yes. We were all brought up as Buddhists. We had a church there in the community. And I don't recall now how many members we had, but all the Japanese in that community belonged to the church.

*The Buddhist church?*

The Buddhist church, yes. The minister would come from Denver once a month or so, and those other Sundays, my uncle would take the part of the minister. We would have church when we were not busy. In the summertime when we had to work on the farm, the church was closed. We'd only have church in the fall and winter, when we'd have time.

*You had an uncle there. Did all your relatives come?*

Well, it was just that one uncle. We did have another uncle come just for a short while, but he didn't stay long. He just came, worked around the farm for a while, and then left; but this one uncle, my mother's brother, stayed on, and he farmed on his own. He died a few years ago in Denver. His wife is still living. About three or four years ago we had a reunion at the church that we used to go to. I have a tape on that, a video tape. If you would like to see the tape, I can let you use it. You can take it and look at it.

*Interesting, yes.*

I don't know what else I had on that. It was about a two or three-day reunion. I left before the war, and during the war, due to the evacuation and things, a lot of other people came into that area so the church membership became much larger. Over half of the people that were at the reunion I didn't know, because I had never met them before—they came in after I left. But the old people, the original group, most of those people came.

*Are you still Buddhist?*

Yes, I am. My wife is Catholic. But to say that I'm Buddhist is just that I haven't taken up any other religion. There is no Buddhist church here, and I don't attend church anywhere.

*Do you follow the Japanese way of ancestor worship?*

Yes. You know religion hasn't played much of a part in our lives.

*What about your son, Gene Hattori? Is he a Buddhist?*

No, he's a Catholic. See, when we got married one of the provisions was that the children be Catholics. My wife was a Catholic, so both of our children are Catholics.

*Does your wife go to church on Sunday?*

She doesn't go to church on Sunday. [laughter] When the children were young they would attend certain church functions, but now that they are gone, I don't think Eugene goes to church now, and I doubt if Jim does, because he's always out, and he's so engrossed in bicycling and sailing and things like that that I'm sure he doesn't go to church.

*Do you still have a kind of family relationship in Japan?*

Well, we must have, but we're not in contact. When my wife and I visited in Japan we did go to Nagaoka, and I tried to find some of my relatives, but I couldn't; I was unable to locate them. My brother told me there's no point in that, because, he said, they don't speak English, and I don't speak Japanese well enough to communicate with them. So it would be just hopeless. [laughter] I did try, though, to find them, but we couldn't.

*You said that your father can read English and speak English quite a bit, and that your mother understood English, but didn't speak English very well?*

That's right. She didn't read any, either.

*Do you know when and how they learned English?*



No, I don't. It had to be on their own, because I am sure they did not attend any formal schooling of any kind, just learned as they went along. So it would be very minimal to say the least. It always amazes me that they got along as well as they did, with the amount of English they were able to speak and read. It really does amaze me that they were able to do the things that they did.

*Did you help them, too, whenever they had to ship farming crops back East? Of course, they had to use English to do business. Did you help them, or could they do that?*

Oh, no. You see, what they had was what they called a packing shed where all the members—sometimes there would be an association—would bring their vegetables to the shed, and then they would have someone there that was fluent in English, and that would take care of that. They would sell it and pay the farmers for their produce. When we were in Colorado just a few years ago, one of the ladies, one of our contemporaries, was in that business. She had worked in the packing shed for, I don't know, some thirty or forty years. But you see, there are people like that, that would take in your produce and sell it for you. So they didn't have to actually sell to places in Chicago or New York; they had people there that would do that for them, but like with truckers, we had to sell, ourselves. We would negotiate prices with them.

*When your parents came by ship to the United States from Japan, were there a lot of people in the same type of situation?*

Oh, yes. I'm sure there were. I don't know from personal experience, but I am sure there were numbers of people on the same ship—they were all Japanese ships. Something Maru.

*And they spread out?*

They came and just spread out all over the West Coast.

*Since your parents came, and one uncle and your cousins came here, what about other relatives? Do you have any other relatives of your parents here?*

No, I don't think so. In fact these uncles and cousins that came were all on my mother's side, none on my father's side. Did you see that movie *Come See the Paradise*?

No.

You didn't? You should see that. [laughter]

*Is it a Japanese immigrants story?*

Yes, it is a story about Japanese immigrants and evacuation. Also, there's a movie where the Chinese women were sold into slavery type of thing, *A Thousand Pieces of Gold*. You ought to see that movie. It's very good. I might have a copy of *Come See the Paradise*. I don't remember if I made a copy of that or not. Well, anyway, I'll get you the video. Let's see, I was going to get you the video on the reunion, wasn't I?

OK. Yes.

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ROY NISHIGUCHI

*Noriko Kunitomi: I am interviewing Mr. Roy Nishiguchi today, November 13, 1992, at his house in Reno, Nevada, Mr. Nishiguchi, does the Oral History Program of the University of Nevada have your permission to make available to the public the tapes and the transcripts of the oral history interviews that we are about to begin today?*

Roy Nishiguchi: Granted. I grant the University of Nevada all rights to whatever I might disclose to you now.

*What part of Japan did your parents come from?*

RN: My dad, I know for sure, came from Wakayama Ken, and my mother from Osaka.

*Do you know why they had to leave Japan?*

RN: Well, my dad came over here at the young age of fifteen in 1905. He told me that he lied about his age, because he had to go out and seek his fortunes elsewhere, because

he had lost his dad out in the ocean. His dad was a fisherman, and he lost his dad, so he had only two sisters and one younger brother. So he signed up with a group of people that were coming over here to work, and that's how he happened to come over here. My mother came over as the result of this so-called *Baishakunin* Program (Go-Betweens) they had. That's how she came over.

*Do you know when your mother came to this country?*

RN: I don't know exactly, but I think it was 1913 when my mother came to America. My dad had told me that he was in charge of a crew of laborers, section railroad laborers, who laid the track for Western Pacific Railroad from Oakland to Salt Lake City. He told me that they passed through Gerlach, north of here, in 1906. He arrived in America in 1905.

*So he came here without knowing how to work in the railroad company?*

RN: Right. He signed up. You probably were aware of the fact that at that time they were looking for laborers over here, cheap laborers, and so naturally they had labor contractors, just like they do now. They had contractors go over to Japan and get as many people as they could that were willing to come over.

*This is the first time I've heard that some of the Japanese people living in Nevada worked in a railroad company. Other people just said in laundry and dry cleaning; some people said just carpenters or small business. None of them or their relatives worked for a railroad company. So I wonder how your father ended up with that particular work?*

RN: Well, he was young. He told me that he was pretty young. He said he was fifteen and had lied about his age to get over here. He said he was with a group of fellows, and he went along with them wherever they went, and they ended up working on the railroad. He said he worked as a laborer, and then, eventually, someone took a liking to him. One of the foremen took a liking to him, and my dad became this white American fellow's assistant, because my dad was more outward in his behavior and everything than the others were, I guess, because of his youth. This fellow took a liking to him and asked him to assist him in getting crews assembled. In other words, he was the go-between. So he told me that, fortunately, because of that, he was always handling men, supervising men, rather than doing the actual work himself. He did it at first, but then when he was selected by this fellow to help him out, why, his work became easier, and that's how it happened that he got on the crew that was working to lay Western Pacific Railroad tracks across the country from California to Utah.

*Did he come to California first?*

RN: I can't recall if it was California or Seattle, Washington. I can't recall which of those two places he came to. I don't know where his boat docked. That's something that I don't know. He never mentioned it to me. All he told me was about his arrival here and how lost he was; he couldn't speak the language, and he talked about how he wished that he knew how to speak the language, so that he could express his feelings, and so that others would be able to realize what kind of a person he is. Other than that, I don't know how it came about.

*Has your mother told you what kind of job she had in Japan before she came here?*

RN: Oh, yes, my mother came from a fairly well-to-do family. She told me that her mother and her dad were involved in the manufacture of silk. Could that be? I don't know, but she told me a silk factory. Also, she said that she taught school over there—she was a school teacher—and that the way she happened to come over here was that everyone seemed to be doing it. They were coming over here as brides for men they hadn't ever seen, but she said that she visited my dad's people in Wakayamaken. I don't know just what town it was, but she told me that she and her mother and her dad went to visit my dad's people, and I guess, through this meeting, she decided to come over here as his bride. He had been over here for several years then. So she came over here when she was twenty years old. So my dad had to have been over here several years, because he came over in 1905, and he is what—maybe ten years older than mom? He was about ten years older than my mother.

Elizabeth Nishiguchi (Mrs. Roy Nishiguchi): Your mother was how old when she passed away?

RN: She was seventy-six.

EN: Seventy-six, and your dad lived to be ninety-seven. So figure the difference there.

RN: Yes, there was about ten years difference. So she came over here at twenty, and he must have been thirty.

*It's interesting. I wonder why your father had at least ten years in this country before he got a bride from Japan? By that time, he probably could speak English pretty well, but he did nothing to get married over here?*

RN: My mother told me this. She said that when she came over here that she had the feeling that my dad was always real friendly with these Caucasian women. She says he got along with them real well, and she said sometimes she feared that he might get involved with them. She talked with us kids one day and said that, "Well, I shouldn't hold it against him, because he was over here all those years, and he must have known some Caucasian women." So she accepted that as something natural. She didn't believe in it, but she accepted it. [laughter] But after they were married, why, then there was no one else involved, because my mother was a beautiful woman. I saw pictures of her when she was a young lady. My sisters have pictures of my mother when she first came over here.

My dad wasn't too shabby in appearance, either. He was one of these fellows that had a lot of get-up-and-go. He had a lot of guts. If he wanted to tell somebody no, he would tell them no, regardless of how they felt about it. I mean, he was really outspoken. He didn't take

to being shoved around by anybody—very strong that way. Another thing, too, he was a very determined person. You know, when he passed away, he was still writing poetry, Japanese poetry, and he'd translate. Of course, his translation wasn't very good, because he didn't have any formal education in English, and he had very little education over in Japan. You might say he was a self-educated man. He was reading all the time. He had dictionaries, and to the day he died he was getting these thick magazines from Japan. Of course, he didn't get them during the war years, but he would always get those, and he would read them, and finally he took up writing poetry, and he entered them in California competitions. One year around 1946 or 1947, I recall, he was invited to attend a festival they had there. It was a music festival—he loved to sing, too.

EN: He could play one of those flutes that he made himself.

RN: Oh, yes.

EN: This is their fiftieth wedding anniversary.

RN: Yes, they were pretty old then.

EN: What was it about your dad and how he became a citizen? How he studied and knew all these answers?

RN: He knew American government better than I did.

EN: Yes, that's what I'm trying to say.

RN: He knew American government better than I did. Now, when I was going to the university, when I was studying for certain

exams in civil government, in civics, I would have to ask him at times, to assure myself that I had the right things in my mind, and he had all the answers. He knew the names of people who were filling the executive branch, the legislative branch; he knew them all. And the judicial, he knew all the justices of the Supreme Court.

So when he was permitted to apply for his citizenship the judge here told him, "It's amazing," because he passed the thing; he answered all the questions and talked to him knowledgeable, because he did know. He was really up on it. He would study all the time. The judge told him, "It's amazing you passed that without any problems." He told him, "You are the first that has gone through this thing easily with no problems."

He was proud of that, because he always talked about wanting to become a citizen of this country. He said he raised his family over here; all the kids had grown up over here, and he said he never intended to go back to Japan, although he said he would like to see his birth place. He said he wanted to be a citizen, but he said, "They won't let me." He was very bitter about that.

*Did he keep his job after he got married to your mother?*

RN: Yes, he stayed with the railroad. By that time the railroad had gone through into Salt Lake, so he took up residence in Salt Lake City, and then later on he got a job working on the Orem Electric Line, which is that electric line from Provo, Utah, to Salt Lake City, Utah. He got a job as the foreman on the crew there. That's when I was born; I was born in Provo, Utah. After that old tour he went to the coal mines. My dad was one of these fellows that wanted to try everything. He would liked to have tried a lot of other things, but he couldn't

go into all fields, because it was not possible. You might say it was almost forbidden for an ethnic person, a minority person, to go for the better jobs. Even if he tried, he wouldn't get them. So he went to the coal mines, and he stayed in central Utah working in the coal mines as a motorman.

Then my mother was taken ill. She had a heart condition, so she had to go to a doctor in Ogden, Utah. While there she didn't want to go back to central Utah; didn't want to go back to the coal-mine town. I don't blame her. It was no place to be stuck, raising a family. So she talked my dad into leaving his job and coming to Ogden, Utah. She had, unbeknownst to him, arranged to buy a noodle parlor there. [laughter] You know what a noodle parlor is? It's a little eating place, and they serve noodles and *sukiyaki* and things like that. So she didn't know too much about business, but because of her desire to stay in Ogden, Utah, she talked to this fellow that had this place for sale. It wasn't the building, just the business. So she talked my father into it.

He quit his job there with the coal-mining company, and he moved all of us into Ogden, Utah. It was a bad move. He always said that he never should have listened to Mama, because they went bankrupt. They were there one year. She hadn't realized that business was so poor, because on that same street, on that one street, there were one, two, three, four noodle parlors. There was the Bamboo Noodle Parlor; there was that noodle parlor, this noodle parlor—and here she was. The reason the fellow wanted to sell was because business was so bad.

But my dad got acquainted with several people there, and they started coming over there and having their dinners and their lunches. It was sort of a young group that liked to go fishing and hunting. So they came there, but just those few people coming there



all the time couldn't support the business, so it folded. It was during the Depression, too—1927, 1928, 1929. We moved to Salt Lake. They couldn't sell the business; they just had to give it up and move out.

So we moved to Salt Lake then, and times were terrible; times were awful. My dad couldn't get a job. I remember he used to work two or three days as a crossing watchman for the railroad that he helped build. They did give him a job there, because of his past. So I recall him going to work about three times a week. Finally, he latched on to a job as section foreman—well, not a section foreman then—extra gang foreman.

I don't know if you are familiar with how the railroad was set up in those days, how the maintenance section of the railroad was set up. They had the railroad divided into ten-mile sections. Each ten-mile section had a foreman and a crew, and they were responsible for keeping up the track, so the trains could go over them smoothly. Over this whole section from Salt Lake to Elko, Nevada, was one division boss; they called them division engineers. From Salt Lake to Elko they had one extra gang. Now this was a big crew, say, about thirty or forty men that replaced the rails and did all the heavy work. They'd go from place to place and stop at bad areas and take off the rails and replace the whole track.

Well, he got a job as foreman of that crew, and that was because of his past experience. When he got that job, though, he couldn't be with the family. We had to live in Salt Lake, and he was out somewhere in Nevada at all times. We never knew where he was. He'd come home once a month. I always thought that he came home once a month just to check up on me to see how I was doing in school, [laughter] because I showed him my first report card. He demanded to see my first

report card, and I got the worst scolding I ever got in my life, and it didn't do any good. So then he bribed me. [laughter] He told me that he would give me a dollar for every A that I got. My grades got better. [laughter] But times were hard. I don't know how my mother raised all of us through those hard times. We were hungry all the time! [laughter] Terrible!

*How many brothers and sisters did you have?*

RN: I have one brother.

EN: Well there was eight of you.

RN: How many sisters?

EN: There were two boys, and the rest were girls, so that's six sisters, and your sister Mary is the oldest, and then you, and then Art, and then Ida, and then Bessie, and then Gracie, and then Joy, and then Mimi.

RN: Yes, Mary is the oldest. I had six sisters and two brothers, you might say, but one brother died when he was just an infant. So we always said we had six girls and two boys in the family. My brother Art is three years younger than I, and I have one sister older than I, and the other girls are all living here in town, except for one who is living in California. I lost one sister about five years ago, and then I lost another sister two years this coming March. Yes, a year and nine months ago. So now there are four sisters and two of us boys left, two of us old men. [laughter]

*So you had a big family? So your mother was a housewife? She never did work outside the home?*

RN: No. She never did work. Oh, on occasions, like when we moved to Reno, she

would go to her friend's place who had a truck farm, and she'd go help them pick onions and things like that. Other than that, she never worked. She couldn't; she had too many kids to take care of. [laughter]

*Eight, yes.*

RN: Washing and ironing. She was strictly a housewife.

*You said that your family came to the northern part of Nevada?*

RN: Yes.

*That was when?*

RN: 1933. Although the extra gang paid more money, my dad found an opening of a section, that is, a ten-mile section of track that he could be foreman of. That was in Gerlach, Nevada, north of here. At that time Gerlach had a grammar school and a high school, and so he put in his bid for that job and got it. That was in July 1933. So we all had to take up roots and come to Gerlach. [laughter] That was a heart-breaking move for me, because I was in my teens then. I had just finished high school that June. I had taken the entrance examinations for the University of Utah, and I was hoping I would be able to go, but we had to come to Nevada, and if you have ever seen Gerlach, Nevada, for the first time, you would probably feel the way I did. There's nothing there, just nothing there. It's out in nowhere. It hasn't changed much to this very day. We go up there to go fishing now and then, but it's a desolate place.

I talked my dad into letting me go back to Salt Lake three months every winter, which I would do. I did that for two winters, went back and stayed with my friend. I'd go

in October and come back in February or March, but the longer we lived in Gerlach, the more accustomed I got to this place, and, eventually, I got used to it. I stopped going to Salt Lake, because it was too far, and I hated to be away from the family, my sisters. So it got to the point where I made friends and got acquainted, got some good buddies there, and I finally got accustomed to the place, and my desire to go back to Salt Lake left me.

*Was it a Japanese ideal, or did your mother or your father ask you to be with the family, even after you graduated from high school?*

RN: My mother and dad tried to keep the family together all the time. I think that's one of my downfalls. That was something that worked against me, because I didn't get married until I was thirty-four years old. I didn't get married until I was thirty-four, because I was home, living at home, bringing my pay check home, and giving it to my mother. If I needed any spending money, I would ask her for it. But that's one of the things that, if I had it to do over again, I would do it differently. I would go out on my own. I could do that and still help them out. But I was kept there at home, and I thought it was part of the Japanese tradition. I don't know too much about that. All I know is my dad told me that, "You are the oldest boy; you have a responsibility to look after this, look after that, do this and do that." That was pounded into my head from the time I was a teenager. So I ended up living at home until I was thirty-four.

This young lady here, my wife, she pulled me away from them. She didn't do it, but, I mean, she was going to go back East where she came from, and when she said that, why, I just said, "OK, let's get married then." [laughter]

*So, Elizabeth, you're originally from Reno?*



EN: No, I'm from Minneapolis, Minnesota.

RN: I met her in Reno.

*Did you work in Reno, or did you often come to Reno?*

RN: I worked here in Reno. You see in 1934 . . . we'll go back to the time I lived in Gerlach. When I became eighteen years of age, my dad, who knew the railroad people real well, got me a job as a student foreman. In other words, I was working for the railroad, but I was being trained to become a foreman. I didn't like that, but I couldn't say anything about it. So anytime a section foreman way out somewhere wanted to go on vacation or wanted to leave the job for a couple of weeks, they'd send me out as a relief foreman to take over the fellow's job while he was gone. That happened to me twice, and finally I couldn't take it. I couldn't stand it any more, being stuck out in the boondocks by myself. So the second time they sent me out, I wired the road master. He was the fellow in charge of that five hundred miles there. I wired him and told him to send out a relief foreman, because I was leaving. So he came out there; he thought I'd damaged the track some way. He was down on his hands and knees and examined the level of the rails and said, "Why are you quitting? You are doing an excellent job."

I said, "That's not the reason why I'm quitting—because I can't handle the job." I said, "The work is a snap. I'm leaving because I'm a young man, and I don't want to be stranded out here anymore. That's the reason why I'm asking you to send out a relief." So he did.

He said, "Well . . .", this is on a Saturday, and he said, "I'll have a relief foreman out here Monday morning."

So I got my suitcase together, and I jumped on a freight train and came back to Gerlach. I thought, "Never again."

So I quit the railroad, much to the anger of my dad. My father became quite angry over that. But I got a job at the gypsum plant. I played baseball. I was a pitcher on the town baseball team. So when I applied for the job at the gypsum plant, the Pacific Portland Cement Company, the foreman said, "Put him on, because," he said, "he's a pitcher. We need him. We can't lose him." The superintendent was the manager of the baseball team. So he gave me a job there to keep me in the local area. Otherwise, I might have to leave town to get a job.

That was quite an ordeal, working there and having my dad look down on me, because he claimed that I gave up the best job that a man could have. My dad thought that being a section foreman, working for the railroad, was the best thing that a person could get, because he'd done it so long. He said, "You have your house furnished; you have your fuel and your coal, your lighting," which was kerosene. He said, "What could you ask for? You can't get that anywhere else." That was his life, but I couldn't stand it. Even then, I was giving my mom the money, all my paychecks.

While pitching for the baseball team there one summer, a fellow who had been watching me pitch for several games came up to me one day and said, "How would you like to go to Portola?"

I said, "What's in Portola?"

He said, "We have a crackerjack baseball team, and every summer in baseball season we hire athletes from all over." He said, "We have athletes from the University of California, St. Mary's, San Jose State, and we give them jobs during the summer." He said, "If you will come and be our pitcher, we'll get you a job and keep you on all the year around,

because you're from our area; you're not a student." So I asked him how much it would pay, and he said, "Well, we'll get you a job for three hundred dollars a month."

Well, I was working for eighty-seven dollars a month for the railroad. For the gypsum plant I was working for five dollars a day, five dollars and thirty-five cents a day. So three hundred dollars a month I thought, great! I told my dad about it. He said, "If you take that job, don't you ever set foot in my house again. All you think about is play."

I tried to explain to him that with three hundred dollars a month I could live and send him home the greater portion of it. But, no, he didn't want that, so I gave that up. That was the way my life went, because I was the oldest son in the family. I'm not bitter about it. I respected my dad. I didn't agree with his ideas, but I respected him. But in 1939, we used to play sand-lot football out in Gerlach between the CCC Camp and the town. So during one of our scrimmages an ex University of Nevada athlete was there, and he asked if I ever thought about going to college. I said, "I've thought about it day in and day out, but," I said, "I can't afford to go."

He said, "Would you go, if you had tuition?"

I said, "Paid-for scholarship?" I said, "Yes, I would."

"OK," he said, "You're a pretty good football player; you're a pretty good runner, so," he said, "I'll go in and talk to Jim Aiken, the coach, and get you a scholarship, athletic scholarship." This fellow happened to be Ted Demosthenes, one of the ex-University of Nevada's players who was all-conference center that was talking to me.

So I told him, "Yes, I would like to go to school." So he got me the scholarship, and I came to the University of Nevada.

My dad . . . [laughter] my father raised holy hell. He said, "You are no longer my son. You still think about nothing but play." And I tried to explain to him that I was going to play to get an education. He said, "No."

So after six weeks I dropped out and went back to Gerlach. They tried to keep me on; the university tried to keep me on—the coach did. They finally let me go and said, "If you promise to come back in the fall."

See, I was going there in January, so that I would be eligible for varsity football in the fall. That's when Nevada first broke away from the Far Western Conference. Nevada became an independent. So if I was in school one semester I could play varsity. So I told them, "No, I've got to go home."

"Promise to come back in the fall. I'm counting on you."

I said, "Well, we'll see. I'll try it." So I left, and I never did go back. Then in 1941 I was drafted for military service for a year, I thought, but it turned out that I was in for the duration. You know, you're Japanese. You're *Nihonjin*, and you can sympathize with me. I was drafted into the army, into the United States Army, sent to Fort Ord, California. You know, they wouldn't serve me drinks in Monterey bars, because I was Japanese. [laughter] I could go to a Japanese place, but, no, my two buddies that wanted me to go to town with them took me into this bar right next to the baseball field. Walked in and they wouldn't serve me. My buddies, one was of Greek descent, one was of Italian descent. They looked over to me and said, "Nish." They called me Nish for short. They said, "Nish, where's your drink?"

I said, "Well, I haven't got it yet."

So they called the bartender. The bartender came over there and whispered to one of them. My buddy said, "Because he's what?" I heard him say that.

So they said, "Come on Nish, come on, let's get the hell out of this place." They had their drinks; they hadn't paid for them yet, because they were waiting for me to get mine. They took their drinks and slammed them into the counter.

See, I didn't feel any of that discrimination when I lived in Gerlach, because we were the only Japanese family there, and I guess we were a rarity. Then we were something unusual to them, so they were nice to us. I went to California, and, God, I was bitter about that. My buddies in the army were OK, because they were from other parts of the country. They weren't from California.

While in the army, I was sent to Letterman Hospital for training. I became the star pitcher, and I was pitching on December 7, 1941. We were facing our toughest opponent, and in the third inning a fellow came running over and said, "Pearl Harbor has been bombed!"

So the umpire wouldn't let him talk. He was a drunk, you know. The fellow was a drunk. They got him off the field, and we finished the game and went over to the bar where we usually went for a beer after the game. There was the radio blasting, just blaring out the news that Pearl Harbor had been bombed, "All military report to their posts immediately."

So they took me up to the post and got me my clothes. I changed clothes and they took me down to the bus depot, but this fellow that was taking me down stopped, and he said, "I've got to pick up my girlfriend." She was a girl, his girl friend, who went to all the games with us. There again he stopped, and she came out and Gaydos said, "Come on, get in. I got to get Nish to the bus depot to take him back to Fort Ord." This was in San Francisco.

So she said, "No."

"Come on, get in, hurry."

"I'm not getting into a car with a God-damned Jap." [laughter]

Oh, that hit me hard, because, see, we were a threesome all the time, his girl friend, Gaydos and I. He was my catcher. So I laud him for it. He got out of the car and knocked her over right on her back. He just smashed her in the face and left her sitting there on the sidewalk. He said, "You dirty bitch! Come on let's go, Nish."

We went up to the bus depot and it was bedlam there. The place was just crowded, civilians, military, everyone was there trying to get on the buses. They wouldn't let civilians get on; the military had to go first. So I managed to get onto a bus, and I went back to Fort Ord, and it was blacked out. They didn't know. They thought Japan was right offshore, I guess, because all the lights were blacked out. I went back to the post and couldn't see. It was kind of foggy, and I sort of had to path out my way back to the company. They were all out in the streets ready to march out. So I got all my equipment, got into my regular fatigue uniform and joined them. We went out one mile away to East Garrison. There went my application for OCS. I was slated to go to Officers Candidate School, and that Pearl Harbor attack did away with that.

So, while stationed at Fort Ord, I got word. I don't know why it took so long, but in February I got word from my sister, who had come all the way from Tennessee to visit my brother, who was also drafted. He was drafted in the latter part of January. So she came out from Tennessee to be with him, because, you know, in war time you don't know what's going to happen. So she came out to say goodbye to him. So while she was there—it was fortunate that she was still there—the railroad kept my dad on the job from December seventh until the latter part of January and then kicked him out, took his

job away, because being a Japanese national he's a security risk. So they ordered him to leave the railroad property.

Well, the whole town of Gerlach was on railroad property. So Mom and Dad didn't know what to do. Well, one of my friends who was not drafted yet at the time, he got a bunch of fellows together, and he rented a trailer for my mom and dad, and they took the trailer off railroad property, which meant that it was out in the desert, out in the brush. And it was, too! Stuck out there in the boondocks, and that is what my mother and dad lived in for about three months, through the winter. No toilet facilities, no nothing. You'd step outside, and you'd step in that mud; that is not fine mud.

Well, when my sister wrote to me and told me about the course of events, I dashed home, took the Greyhound Bus. I didn't have any money. I borrowed money from my buddies at Fort Ord, took the bus and came to Reno. I was going to stop off in Reno and then call my sister to drive in after me, because I left my car with them. So I went to this Overland Hotel, and the fellow wouldn't give me a room. He wouldn't give me a room, because he said, "You are a dirty Jap."

I said, "I have an American uniform on; at least respect your country's uniform."

He said, "You're a God-damned dirty Jap. Get out of here." [laughter] So I grabbed the pen stand—there was a marble pen stand there—and I threw it at him with all . . . I intended to hit him with it, but I missed. It hit against the wall and shattered the porcelain tiles—shattered the tiles. I think if I had hit him, it would have killed him, might have killed him.

So I stormed out of there, and, out of the money that I borrowed to take home, I used thirty dollars of it to go from Reno to Portola to catch the train. The cab driver was nice enough to drive me out there, but

he said it would cost me thirty dollars. So I went to Portola, caught the train, and went into Gerlach, got there, and inquired about Mom and Pop, and my sister told me where they were. I asked her not to come with me, because it was too muddy; it was wintertime then.

So I walked out there, and there was that trailer out in nowhere! And I sloshed through that gumbo mud, that muddy off-white soil. My feet got about that big. It stuck to my shoes. I walked out there, and the trailer was just large enough to hold a double bed, and that was all. I knocked on the door, and I could hear my mother and dad talking. They were afraid; they were scared! They were afraid that someone was there to blast them. I could hear them whispering, so I called out, and I said, "It's Roy!"

So my dad opened the door then. I didn't think it happened in America, but it sure did. Well, there wasn't a thing I could do for them. They couldn't stay on railroad property. My time was limited; I only had a seven-day leave. A seven-day furlough was all I had. It took a day going and a day coming, so I only had five days there. And there wasn't a thing I could do. What could I do? I couldn't move them to Reno. I didn't know Reno. I didn't know anything, but my friend, Paul Wayne, told me, "Go back to Fort Ord; we'll take care of them. We'll look out for your mom and dad." So I went back to Fort Ord then.

In the meantime, a year later, I don't know how it happened, but my mom and dad had moved to Reno, and they had taken my youngest sister with them. She was just a baby then. The other girls stayed in Gerlach to finish school, and they stayed with my oldest sister, who was visiting from Tennessee. She had rented a house in town. Now they could stay in town, because they were American citizens, but my dad and mom were put out in

the desert. So, eventually, everyone moved to Reno, over a course of a year and a half. They all got into Reno.

I'd been transferred to Texas in the meantime. The army had pulled all the *Nisei* off the coast. All the *Nisei* in the army on the West Coast were transferred inland. We didn't know where we were going. I, for one, thought that I would be going into combat. No, we didn't go into combat. They sent my group down to Camp Wolters, Texas. They sent some others to Missouri. But I ended up in Texas and I became a trained medical technician who served the army the first year by [laughter] emptying garbage cans. We were American soldiers, serving in the American army, doing jobs that were formerly performed by the bad element in the army, those that were put in the stockade, prisoners in the stockade that don't like work that we had to do. But after the Hawaiian *Nisei* made such a good showing in Europe, you know, the Hundredth Battalion, things got better for us. Then when the Four Forty-Second Regimental Combat Team was organized in Camp Shelby, Mississippi, all of the *Nisei* were treated like dogs by the townspeople there. I didn't make it there, because they sent me up to study Japanese—studying the *Nihongo*, Japanese Language, to go to the Pacific. But those that went to Camp Shelby eventually ended up fighting in Europe. Then there was such irony, because they were treated like dogs—and a couple of those boys, my friends, lost their lives. Went over to get killed. After the Four Forty-Second was in battle over there for several months, they treated us like kings in Texas, especially after the *Nisei* rescued a Texas Battalion. They thought we were deserving of the best then. I was working in the hospital ward and getting pushed around and all that stuff. When the Four Forty-Second rescued the Texas Battalion of

the Thirty-Sixth Division (Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana Division), then things got real good for us, for me.

Then I came home in 1944, I think. Well, first of all, I spent a tour up there in Camp Savage, up in Minnesota, studying Japanese. It was tough, because I didn't know Japanese. I went to *Nihongako* (Japanese school) in Salt Lake. But my dad was funny. My dad was so gung-ho on being an American that he told mom, "There's no use spending money to send them to Japanese school after the regular school, because we're in America," he said. So I went to Japanese school for two years; two years I went. I'd go to high school, come back and go to Japanese school. I enjoyed it. I was learning my mother's tongue. But I couldn't finish; I couldn't continue. So when I was sent up to Military Intelligence Language School, it was tough, [laughter] but I didn't want to flunk out, so I used to study in the latrine after "lights out" at ten p.m.

But I didn't want to flunk out of school, Japanese language school, because that would be disgraceful, I thought. So I studied hard. I used to use the dictionary and write a letter home in Japanese to my mother, using the dictionary and getting the right *kanji* (Japanese characters) and everything. My mother was real proud about that. I said, "Well I made a lot of mistakes, didn't I?"

And she said, "No, it's amazing." She said, "You're sure learning a lot."

And I said, "No, I'm not learning." I had a smattering of the format to put the letters into, but I said, "I used the dictionary." But she was still proud of me. Then two weeks before my group was supposed to go overseas, I had to go and see a doctor, and he found a lump on the side of my neck. So he sent me to the station hospital. So I didn't make it. I think, perhaps, God was with me. I think he was looking out for me for some reason, I don't know what.



But my group got over there, over to Okinawa, and they all died. Their plane—they were in a C-47—hit a peak over there in the fog. I got wind of this later on, afterwards, while I was still in the hospital. I got word that Sergeant Nakajima and his twelve interrogators and interpreters were killed in a plane crash. I thought, “My God! I guess the good Lord is looking out for me.”

Well, after that, they wouldn’t let me go back in the service. They said, “We can’t let you get back in. We have to give you a medical discharge.”

I didn’t want that. How could I have spent all this time in the army? And all my friends are in the army. “You can’t send me home.”

“We have to.”

I made up every excuse possible. I told them, “I have to stay in the army, because I’ve got my army pay going home to my parents.” See, of my army pay, I had to give forty-five dollars out of my fifty-two dollars, put into what they called a Class E Allotment. The government would match it. My folks would then get ninety dollars. So I gave forty-five dollars every month; Uncle Sam would give forty-five; my folks would get ninety. I had three dollars and fifty cents to live on each month after donations to the Company Fund, et cetera, for the three years I was in the service. And they were going to send me home. I said, “No. What will my folks live on?”

“Well, we’ll give you a 100 percent disability; that’s a hundred dollars a month,” they said. [laughter] “We’ll give you 100 percent disability, which is one hundred and fifteen dollars.”

I said, “No. I’ve got to stay in the service. All my buddies are in the service. I don’t want to go home, there’s nobody there. All my buddies are in service.”

Well, they said, “No, we have to. We can’t let you get back in active ranks and have you

go overseas and be an added work load to the doctors.” They told me I had something wrong with . . . what it was, it was an infection in my lymph glands that caused that lump to get big. I thought it was because of a basketball injury when I got knocked into the seats. But they said, “No, we can’t take the chance of giving the doctors overseas an additional work load. So we’ve got to give you a discharge.”

So they did. They sent me home, and I went to my old job back out in Gerlach for about six months. Then I thought, “Well, I’m going to see about going to the university.” So I enrolled in the university in the College of Engineering, and I couldn’t make it, because my clothes were wearing out. [laughter] All my army clothes. I was still wearing my army clothes for the two years, but they were getting worn, and I couldn’t buy myself any clothes with the money they gave me for education. They gave me a hundred and twenty-seven dollars a month. The regular GI were getting ninety dollars a month, but I was getting one hundred and twenty-seven, because of my disability. One hundred of that was going to my mother and dad. My dad couldn’t get a job in Reno. My sisters couldn’t get decent work. One sister happened to get a job with the *Reno Evening Gazette*, but the others had to pick odd jobs like working in a potato-chip factory.

*Even though they were citizens?*

RN: Yes, they are citizens, but they couldn’t get any work. You don’t realize how bad Reno was. They wouldn’t give me—a GI, a soldier—a room in a hotel. They were really racially prejudiced here in this town. This is a bad town. It was bad. I’m lucky that there were Indians around, because the Indians took the pressure off me by being Indians. They were harassed. They were persecuted, too. So a

lot of times I thought, “Thank God, there’s Indians around here. They’ll take the brunt of the persecution off my shoulders.” [laughter] You know I’m looking at it. I was bitter back in those days. I was especially bitter when I came back from the army. I was bitter, because I thought, “God I’m born and raised in this country and served in the army and it didn’t make any difference. Nothing improved.” This was a bad town. I guess it’s better now; it’s a lot better now. It’s because of the younger people. See, the old ones that were responsible for all this persecution, are old now, and the young kids at that time are now the adults of today, and they have a different outlook on things. So things are better. But the old timers are really bad. People don’t know this, but I do, because I’m Japanese, and I felt it. I don’t know how you people in Japan felt, but we had a tough way to go, especially on the West Coast.

It’s amazing how different sections of the country are. Like when I’m in the army, I couldn’t go to a bar and be served in California, but when I went back to Minnesota, they were Caucasians, too—they were the same white people, same as those living here in California—but those back there treated us like human beings. Of course, I guess it was because there weren’t many Japanese living back there, back East. I think, well, in a way, I guess the Japanese were harassed in California, because there were so many of them. That’s where they all congregated. I had one fellow tell me, “You Japanese are a clannish lot.”

*What’s that?*

RN: Clannish, you know, like we stick together a lot. I said, “No, we’re not clannish.” But I said, “We’re forced to stick together, because you people,” I said, “you honkeys . . .” I told this one fellow—he was my buddy but

I told him—which is borrowing from the Negro, the blacks, “You honkeys won’t accept us.”

So he laughed, and he said, “Well, we’re not all like that.” He told me. He was my good buddy. He said, “We’re not all like that.”

But I said, “That’s the reason why in California the Japanese always get together, congregate in one area. They live in one certain section of town, because they were driven to it. They weren’t allowed to rent a home over there. They weren’t allowed to buy a home over here.” It’s the same thing that the blacks are facing today, but I think things are getting better for all of us now, because of the baby boomers that are growing up now. They were all right, but the old timers, they were a narrow-minded, bigoted lot. They were bigoted from the word “go.” Like I said before, somebody might argue this point with me, but I’ve been there.

*So, you said you didn’t finish school?*

RN: No. See, I went the first year, but I went to summer school, because I wanted to get as many credits as I could to get these out of the way, because I was thirty years old when I went to the university. I was no young chicken. I had been out of high school for twelve years, and there was nothing in this head. I had to study real hard, and I had to try to get back into the swing of things, and I thought if I go to summer school, why, the change in my life would stay with me. So I went the first year and went to summer school and went the second year, and then one of my buddies told me, “Hey, Nish, you got a hole in your sleeve.” [laughter]

That was embarrassing, I didn’t notice. So then I got to looking at my clothes, my GI clothes, I was still wearing army clothes, two years after being out of the service. I had



some clothes that I wore before I went into the army, but then they wouldn't fit me. So I thought, "Well I had better go to work this summer." So I did. I went back out to Gerlach to the plant where I used to work, and they gave me a job. The bad and unfortunate thing was, just when I was getting ready to quit my job and come back to school, the chairman of the board of trustees out there at the high school asked me if I would stay and coach their high school basketball team. [I must have been confused about this period, during the interview, because I did coach the Gerlach High School basketball team in 1947 and 1948 and went to work for Marshall Guisti in the fall of 1948.] So I said, "Well I've got to go back to the university. I've got to go back and enroll. In fact, I'm a day late now," because the juniors have to register on a certain day, and upperclassmen have to register on a certain day, and the freshmen on a different day. So I said, "I'm already a day late. All my classes probably will be filled."

So I drove in to Reno, and Fred Aoyama, whom you interviewed, and his partner had a service station and a tire distributorship down here on the corner of Fourth and Lake. He said, "What brings you in town this time of the week?"

I said, "I came in to enroll at the university."

So Marshall, his partner, came out and said, "You're late."

I said, "I know I'm late; I'm a day late, but I'm going to go up on the hill and try to get some of the classes that I am required to have."

So Fred took me aside and said, "Roy, why don't you stay here and work?" He said, "We'll work you into a 10 percent partnership, 10 percent of the business."

I said, "Is that right?"

He said, "Yes. Al Black, our other partner, quit and took out his share of the business." So

he said, "You stay with us, come to work for us, and you can work into that 10 percent."

So I thought, "Well, that sounds good," because it was a growing business. So I went to work for Marshall Guisti and Fred Aoyama. I came into town and brought all my clothes and didn't go back to school. [laughter] So I worked for Fred Aoyama and Marshall for four years, and then I injured my back.

I was under doctor's care, surgeon's care, for nine months. He told me I couldn't go back to that kind of work any more. He said, "I can't release you for that kind of work."

So I went back to Fred and Marshall to see if they would let me work the gas pumps, rather than work the tires. "No, we can't do that." Marshall was very forward about it. He said, "If we hire you back, it's going to boost our insurance rates."

I said, "OK."

So that's when I went to apply for a job out at Stead Air Force Base. I met a lieutenant here in town at the bowling alley, and I told him my situation. He told me to come out to the base, and he would introduce me to the captain, who might be able to put me on, because the base had just opened. So I went out, and they gave me a job. They started me out as a warehouseman. I worked from a warehouseman to a leader, so-called leader, to a foreman, and then one of the supply officers came out. He wanted to stabilize the position, because it was formerly filled by military officers, who'd come and go. They might come in and be here four months, and they might get going on a mission. Another officer would come in. So there was no continuity there. So this major, Major Saylor, asked me what I thought about it. He said, "I want to make you my materiel facilities officer."

I said, "That's a military slot. I can't fill it."

He said, "I'll convert it to civilian."

So I thought, "Hell, he probably can't get it converted."

But he came to me the next day, and he said, "OK. Manpower and civilian personnel have agreed to convert that slot from military to civilian." So he said, "I want you to fill it."

I said, "Well, how about my boss, the boss who is over me, who is also a civilian?"

The major told me, "I want you to fill it."

I said, "Well, you're going to create friction."

Well, he said, "I'm ordering you to take it." So I took the job, and it did create friction. The guy who was formerly my boss resented it very much, and I don't blame him, because he'd been in civil service longer than I. He was highly resentful of me being chosen over him, me being chosen to be his boss. I took him aside and talked to him, and he relented. He cooled down. We became pretty good friends, as well as fellow employees. But I became materiel facilities officer of base supply, which position I filled until they closed the base in 1966. They held me over for another two years to be in charge of the base closure. So I was released from there in 1968 when all the equipment was disposed of.

I went to work for Lear Motors, Lear Enterprises, out at Stead. From there I went to K-Mart Warehouse, became a foreman there, supervisor. They called them supervisors then. Now they call them area leaders. Then I injured my knee, but I was over retirement age, anyway, so I decided to take my retirement. I retired when I was age seventy. I am now seventy-seven.

While I was there working at the K-Mart Warehouse, Mr. Honda, the auto manufacturer from Japan—he died recently—came through with about forty associates on a tour of the warehouses. I guess they wanted to compare the warehousing in Japan to the warehousing over here. He was a very nice person, Mr.

Honda. He had some very knowledgeable people with him, too. You know I don't speak very good Japanese. In fact, my Japanese is very poor. I tried to talk to him in Japanese, but I couldn't. So I'd speak some Japanese words and some English, mostly English, but I heard Mr. Honda ask one of his subordinates, "He's most likely a Nisei?"

So I said, "Yes, I'm a *Nisei*. I was born here. My parents came from Japan." And I told him, "I'm ashamed that I can't speak Japanese very good." [laughter]

He told me, "That's all right." He said, "I don't speak very good English, either." Quite a nice fellow. When he departed, he left me with a gift. Mr. Honda was a very nice fellow, I thought. I know that he had the respect of all those people with him. It's so different to see people on that level compared to the people on that level over here. That's between you and me.

While I was there at the warehouse there were several incidences when the warehousing general supervisor found fault with some of the merchandise that came from Japan. In this one case we had a big shipment of photo albums come over, and they had those magnetic self-adhesive pages in them. Some of the stores that we shipped them out to sent them back and said, "The pages aren't adhesive. They're not working the way they are supposed to." So Mr. Carne, our general manager, complained to the head office of K-Mart Corporation, and they contacted the Japanese manufacturers. They sent over eight people, and those people went through two thousand five hundred cases in seven days time, opening each case of twenty-four albums and replacing the bad pages, and it was then that I realized I had fellows working for me that just couldn't put out, didn't have the initiative, didn't have the desire to work.

I watched these fellows and I told one of my guys, "If you fellows only worked like that." I said, "If you would work only half as efficiently as those fellows working there."

He agreed with me. He said, "Boy, I've never seen anyone work so efficiently." But they went through all those cases; everything was systematic. One fellow cut open the box. He dumped the thing upside down, taped the box over at the other end, and this fellow would start going through it, opening it page by page, take the screw driver, and take out the bad ones, pass it to the next fellow. He put in the good ones; the next fellow put in the screws; the next fellow would pack them back in the cases—two thousand five hundred cases in one week—in seven days time, and they only worked eight hours a day.

The fellows down there at the warehouse marveled. "Jesus Christ, they must be crazy!" [laughter] The difference of attitude, I'm telling you this. I don't how the university is going to accept the truth. That is the truth.

*What kind of social life did your mother have?*

RN: Oh, what kind of social life she had? I would say that my mother's social life was normal, because there were other Japanese families around.

*In Utah?*

RN: Yes, in Salt Lake. I think it was normal. She always took part in church affairs; she always had her friends come and visit her; she would go and visit her friends in return. Oh, I think she enjoyed it there in Utah, in Salt Lake. I know that she was lonely for them after we came to Gerlach, after we came to Nevada, being the only Japanese family there. I'm sure, I know, I sensed it, I felt that she was lonely, but my dad was gracious enough to let

her go back and visit her friends every now and then. She'd get on the train, but mom wouldn't stay very long, because she missed her kids too much. She couldn't stay away from her children, but she had no social life there in Gerlach. She had no social life at all. She tried to mingle with the Caucasian ladies there, but she had one good friend. She had one good Caucasian friend who had moved to Gerlach; her husband moved to Gerlach. Mom would talk to her in her broken English, but they understood each other; they got along real good, and that was the only friend she had.

*Did your mother talk with you and your brother and sisters in Japanese or broken English?*

RN: My mother spoke to us in Japanese, but my dad would speak to us in English. So we had both languages going on in the house. [laughter]

*Your mother spoke Japanese to your father?*

RN: Oh, yes.

*And he spoke back to her in Japanese?*

RN: Yes. Sometimes he would speak back to her in English, and she'd look at him, and he would jokingly tell her, "You've been in the country almost as long as I have, but you don't understand what I'm saying in English?"

So one time that he was telling her that, I said, "But, Pop," I said, "but you don't speak very good English, either." I said, "Maybe that's why she doesn't understand you." [laughter] But no, they spoke Japanese, but now and then he'd speak English to her, because in the house, at home, he would speak to us in English. You know, it's something pretty comical. [laughter] I never chuckled when I

saw him, but he would never speak Japanese to us.

A funny thing, when I was a kid—I'll never forget this—when I was a kid back in the coal mines, my dad was with me making a boat for me, whittling away, and something came up about wars. So he told me, he said, "Roy, if America and Japan fight, who do you fight for?" He was talking in English, because he insisted that that was our language. I was born in America, and I'm going to be an American. So he always spoke in English. So he said, "If Japan and America fight, who are you going to fight for?"

So I said, "Japan."

He said, "*Baka* (fool)!" [laughter] He said, "You were born in this country; you are an American. You fight for *your* country." So I told him then—I was about twelve or thirteen—well, we talked about it. I said, "You talked about fighting for your own people." I said, "You told me how Japanese would fight to the death for their country." So I said, "I'm Japanese. So I'll fight for them."

He said, "You are American. You are born in America. This is your country. You fight for this country." He was funny that way, but he changed later on. He was very bitter. He was very bitter about the fact that they denied him a chance to become a citizen. He studied so hard, and he tried so hard to become a U.S. citizen, but because of his race, he was out. And he was bitter about that. But he said, "I'm going to keep on studying." He said, "I'm going to keep on reading." He said, "Because that's for me." He said, "Everything I read is for me. Whether anybody else wants it or not, it doesn't matter." But he was bitter about being denied citizenship.

*Finally, he got citizenship, didn't he?*

RN: Yes, he did. That was after that law was revoked. When he first became eligible, he

was one of the first ones in Reno to go up and take the test. He was dying for the moment. He went up there, and he was all prepared. The judge told him, "Well, you take these things, and you go home and study them."

"I don't need that; I'll take the test now."

*And he did good?*

RN: Yes. And he passed.

*Since your mother talked to you in Japanese, she probably kept in her heart her own Japanese values and taught Japanese values to you. Could you give some examples of what kind of Japanese values you think your mother taught you?*

RN: Oh, my mother was different from my dad. My mother valued the Japanese culture: the things that the Japanese value, the way that Japanese look at things, the things they do, the way she did them when she was a girl in Japan. She placed a lot of value on that. Speaking politely to your elders—you must always respect your elders. Be they right or wrong, you've got to respect them as elders. What you do after they're gone is your business, but while you're confronting an elder, you be respectful to him. She always preached about love for your brothers, your sisters—always looking out for them. I guess that's normal in any family, and, well, that's the extent of it. Maybe there are a lot of other things, too, but what I remember about her was, always be good to other people. It was like taking a page out of the Bible, the Christian Bible. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." That's what she always professed. But above all, she said, "Be kind to your sisters and your brothers." And she said, "If something displeases you, just turn your other cheek."

I guess I was my mother's favorite, because every time, even after my wife Betty and I were married, if I'd come over to visit with her, which I did often, she always insisted that I stay and have a bite to eat. She would prepare me something special. And I heard Betty telling Pop, "I love to watch. I enjoy cooking for Roy, and I love to watch him eat, because he makes everything seem so tasty. When he's eating, he makes everything look so good."

I think my mother brought the best out in me. She loved her kids. In 1939, before the war, she was all set to go back to Japan to visit her family: her brothers, and her mother, who was still alive, and her dad. One brother had already died. She only had two brothers. She had two brothers and two sisters. Her two sisters died several years ago, and one brother died, so she had one brother left. So it was all set for her to go back to Japan. She had her visa and everything all prepared, all set. She was going to depart San Francisco on a certain date. She couldn't go; she couldn't make it. She couldn't leave her kids behind her. [laughter] Isn't that strange? My dad, oh, he talked to her and talked to her. She said, "No. What if something happens to me over there, and my kids are over here?" And she couldn't go and had to get a refund. [laughter] We all tried to talk her into going, but no, she started bawling. [laughter] She cried and cried. She cried on one hand for not being able to see her brother, and she cried here because, "I don't want to leave you." [laughter] She was a very tender-hearted person, but she could be tough, too, if we did anything wrong.

*Did she cook Japanese food a lot?*

RN: Yes. I miss her cooking. [laughter] I sure miss her cooking. Betty tries. She learned from my mother. She learned how to cook

rice, and she learned from my mother how to make *tsukemono* (Japanese pickles), but not like my mother. The flavoring and all, it's not like my mother's. There's a lot of Japanese foods that I miss. But my little woman, she tries. She makes *sukiyaki* for me; she boils noodles for me, but she can't flavor the noodles the way my mother did. You know why? Because she doesn't use *katsuo bushi* (dried bonito) and stuff like that. She uses bouillon cubes. [laughter] A big difference! Or she might broil or brown pork chops, and then she can't season them the way that I'm accustomed to eating them. I am used to my mother's cooking, after all these years, and I loved my mother's food. I guess all children love their mother's cooking. She was a good cook.

*So, she kept contact with her parents and relatives over in Japan until she passed away?*

RN: Yes, yes. Betty, was mama alive when my cousins came over here?

EN: No.

RN: No. She had already passed away. That's right, my cousins . . . was that Yasuo's mother that came with them?

EN: Yes.

RN: Yes, after my mother died, her sister-in-law and her nephew and a family friend came over and visited with my dad. I thought, oh, dear, it would have been so nice if my mother had been still alive, because she wrote to them all the time. Oh, she was always writing letters. I don't think my dad missed Japan so much. I don't think he did, because he left there when he was so young, but my mother was twenty years old when she left.



So she used to talk about Japan quite a bit. She used to talk about Japan. She would sing little Japanese songs, and I know she missed Japan.

*Did your father keep contact with his relatives in Wakayama?*

RN: My dad's side of the family are all gone. He lost a brother in the Philippines, and he lost another brother in Austria. They all died of sickness. He lost his father at sea when he was still there. As a boy, he lost his father. He told me one day, "Dad went out in a fishing boat with others, and his boat never came back." So his dad lost his life on the ocean, and his mother passed away, so he had nobody over there, but my mother did. Her brothers passed away, both of them—the elder one and the younger one, and then she had her sister-in-law, and she had the nephews. Yasuo was my mother's nephew, the son of the oldest boy in her family, who was my mother's oldest brother, the one just under my mother. Yasuo was his son, and he came over here. He brought his whole family over, and they spent about a week here. I don't hear from them any more. I used to get letters from them, but something happened, I think, because of my ignorance of Japanese customs. I think that's what caused it. Like when my dad passed away, Yasuo who is my cousin, sent my sister an amount of money. That's a Japanese custom, isn't it?

Yes.

RN: And it's also a Japanese custom, I think, that the oldest take care of the responsibilities, isn't it?

*Yes. Usually, the first boy.*

RN: OK. Now over here, it was different with our family. You see, when my mother and dad were still alive, they lived with my two sisters who went in together and bought a house. They bought a house in their names, but they bought it for Mom and Pop, see. They bought it for Mother and Dad, and it was just over here, about three blocks down the street, on Gridley Avenue. So my dad and mother lived with my sisters, and when this sister got married, she moved off. This sister got married and moved off. So they were left with the youngest sister, who was married in the meantime, too, but they stayed there, and they took care of my mother and dad, because they were in the same house. So my mother and dad came to rely on her. By the way, I think she's the one in the family that has the most up here, anyway, you know, this sister, but my mother and dad shouldered her with all the responsibilities, and she handled it; she took care of them. So when my dad passed away, my sister notified them (the relatives in Japan) of his passing, and Yasuo sent her a sum of money. So I asked my sister, "Well, I think I'd better write Yasuo and acknowledge it."

She said, "No, you don't have to. I already did. I already acknowledged it in all of our names," she said.

So I said, "Oh, OK. I hope that will stand." But Yasuo stopped writing to me. He stopped writing to me. He used to send me Christmas cards; he used to write letters to me, but he stopped. So I told my sister then, "Well, I should have acknowledged it and taken care of things, because," I said, "now he's stopped writing to me. But," I said, "I don't give a damn." I said, "If that's the reason why he quit, so be it."

*Well, does he still write to your sister?*

RN: Oh, he sends her greeting cards, I think. I don't know. I haven't inquired about that.

*It is unusual to stop sending greeting cards to you because you didn't acknowledge the money he sent, so I wonder if he's sick or something.*

RN: Well, see, Yasuo was the oldest in his family, and when his dad died, I guess he handled everything, so I guess when my dad died, he expected me to handle everything, but it wasn't that way with us. Like I said before, my mother and dad left my baby sister, as I call her, and they left everything up to her. They relied on her to take care of everything. I mean, I contributed toward their support, because even up to the day that my mom died, Betty and I used to contribute thirty dollars a month. We'd give them thirty dollars a month, come hell or high water, thirty bucks a month. Then, even after my mom died, I took it up to the house to give it to father, and he said, "Roy, Mom is gone now, and you don't have to give it to me any more." He said, "My railroad retirement check (which finally came through) will take care of me."

But I thought it was strange that Yasuo stopped writing to me; I thought it was strange that he stopped even sending me a Christmas card, but I thought, "Well he's angry at me about something, so let him stew in his own anger." That's a hell of a way to feel, but that's the way I feel now. He just quit me cold turkey. I think Japan is changing in a way, isn't it?

*Yes. Very quickly.*

RN: I think my cousin, Yasuo, who is the oldest, is of the old school. I think he is. I don't think he can see beyond the age-old traditions, the old, old-time traditions.

But I'm so fouled up in all the Japanese culture. I don't have any Japanese culture. I've lost it all, if I had any. My mom used to try to make a little rub off on me, but I don't know. I think of Japan and Japanese things. Like when I was up at the garage sale this morning, just before it was time for you to come, I saw a place mat over there that had little wheat, straw, bits of artistry—made in Japan. I see things like that, and I see these bonsai plants, and all that, and I think about it. All these things that Mom used to try to teach me, some of it rubbed in. But, God, I'm a barbarian now. I'm not a barbarian from the standpoint of not being well mannered and being discourteous, but I've lost the contact with the finer things in life. I guess that's because I don't circulate much. Since I've gotten old, I don't circulate; I don't get around and mingle. I don't go to the JACL meetings. I don't go where the other *Niseis* congregate. But when I drive past the university there, it strikes me every now and then. I see students that I swear are Japanese. I know they're Japanese. Like the other day, my wife and I headed for the bank, and we drove past the university, and I told her, "There's a Japanese girl." I'll bet she's knocking down good grades. [laughter]

Oh, that's one thing that my dad and mother both expected of all their children: when you go to school, you're going to school to learn, not to have fun, not to mingle with your friends; you're going there to study—something they always pushed on us. I hear a lot of people saying this. In fact, back there in Utah, they said, "Those Japanese kids are sure intelligent." It's not that the Japanese kids are intelligent; it's that their parents are pushing them. Japanese parents aren't as easy going as the Caucasian parents.

*That's true.*



RN: My dad used to tell me, "I want you to get good grades, because you're Japanese. I want you to stand out. I don't want other people to think that you're a dummy." But they were very, very devout, education minded, I guess. [laughter]

*Well, I think that's all I needed to ask you.*

RN: You have nothing more to ask me?

*Well, based on the questions that I'm supposed to ask you, I guess.*

RN: Oh, you've asked me everything that you are supposed to ask me?

Yes.

RN: Did I pass the test? [laughter] Well this old brain of mine is foggy. I mean, it's like I can't . . . I don't think too clearly. Don't you get this way when you get older. I can remember things of a week ago, but I can't remember what I did an hour ago. It's weird. I came in here this morning, came in to get the keys for my truck, so I could drive it, and I got right in here and forgot what I was after.



## GEORGE OSHIMA

*Noriko Kunitomi: Today, November 6, 1992, I am interviewing Mr. George Oshima at his house in Reno, Nevada. In this interview we will discuss Japanese people in Nevada and also in the United States who came from Japan to the United States before World War II. Mr. Oshima, does the Oral History Program of the University of Nevada have your permission to make public the tapes and transcripts of this interview?*

George Oshima: Yes, I believe that paper says that.

*Thank you. First of all, I want to start with general questions, like when and where and which part of Japan did your family come from?*

Both parents are from Hiroshima.

*Do you know when?*

I'm not quite certain, but my father immigrated here in 1905; I'm not certain of this. My mother landed in Hawaii, part of the

United States, in 1912. She was in Hawaii for a while.

*Do you know why they got married in California. Did they meet each other in California?*

I don't have the papers, but I believe they were married in Sacramento, because that's where my father was for some time. He was in Hawaii for awhile and then he went to Sacramento.

*Do you know when they got married?*

I don't have that information. No, I don't have the papers or anything.

*Did your parents ever tell you the reasons why they had to come to the United States?*

Oh, I don't think they *had* to come; I don't think they *had* to come to the United States. I believe that, like a lot of the other Japanese nationals, they felt things were going to be

better here—to improve themselves. I assume that; I don't know that, and I don't know what they did before. Like my mother, when she came over, I think she was only about twenty-one. So they were fairly young. So I think they were looking for opportunities. Now, I don't know what their folks did in Hiroshima; that I don't know. I should know, but I don't know. [laughter]

*My parents are from Hiroshima.*

Oh, are they?

*Yes. Could you tell me when your family came to Nevada?*

Yes, the family moved from Stockton to Reno in 1935.

*Do you know why they come to Nevada in 1935?*

Yes, because my mother's sister and her husband had a laundry here, and they were going to go back to Japan, and so they asked my dad and mother to come up and take over the laundry.

*In California did your parents have a laundry business?*

My dad was in the cleaning business in Stockton.

*How about your mother? Did she do something?*

Well, she helped, like all Japanese families, but she also taught at our Japanese school, Abokoki Japanese school. She taught Japanese there to the kids, to youngsters. So she was a part-time school teacher.

*Which language did you speak with your parents?*

I think when we were young in the house, we spoke Japanese, but eventually, as we got older, it was a mixture. Our parents understood a certain amount of English, so it was fine. We spoke Japanese at home, but not completely, like in Japan. [laughter]

*Could you tell me whether or not your parents tried to keep Japanese heritage in your family in the United States?*

Oh, I think they showed us some of the traditional things. Well, I assume they were traditional. They didn't try to hold back anything—when we were children, especially. So I would say partly, yes. I think we were taught some of the things about Japan that we've retained today.

*Could you give me examples of those?*

Well, New Year's was a big time for the Japanese. The women would cook the things, and the men would go around New Year's visiting, and the wives would have to stay and entertain the other friends that would come over. Oh, things of that type. I think in Stockton they had a Hiroshima convention, and they would have picnics and things, which is maybe more customized, because people tend to be together from common interests. We are not really geared into many of the Japanese customs, but one of the traditions was church activities—festivals, and certain things.

*Church means Buddhist church? So that means you are Buddhist?*

Well, let's see. We were supposed to be baptized. I wasn't, but my two sisters were. I have three sisters, and two of them were baptized, because the parents were strong

church people, but since we moved here, of course, we've gotten away from that. Well, at least I consider myself a Christian now, and she is Christian.

*Do you keep Japanese traditions here right now?*

In what way?

*Like your parents kept some Japanese traditions—like eating Japanese food, and doing Japanese hobbies, and teaching Japanese ideals and values to the children? Now the new generation is starting their own families. Do you teach the kind of Japanese values, which were taught by your parents, to your children?*

I don't think so. If we did, we didn't do it intentionally, but since my wife and I know some things about the Japanese family, and the children grew up with us, they accepted it, but we didn't purposely say, "Well, this is what you've got to know about our background," or their grandparents' background. We didn't do it, especially, but I think they learned. In fact, some of our grandchildren now are interested in the Japanese culture and background. Several of them are really interested. So in a way, I think, it's rubbing off on them, but we're not giving our thoughts to prepare them to know a lot about our background.

*If I meet them, I'm not going to see any Japanese elements from them? Do they eat Japanese food often?*

Yes, they do. Our children like Japanese food. [laughter] Yes, we eat Japanese food regularly, and my wife is pretty good in cooking Japanese.

*Did you learn how to cook Japanese food from your mother?*

EUNICE OSHIMA (MRS. GEORGE OSHIMA): Not a lot, because when you are young you don't really watch, but some recipes I learned growing up [laughter] That's how you learn. Sometimes you wish you did pay more attention.

*Did your parents intend to stay here permanently, or just a short time and then go home to Japan?*

Well, I don't think we ever discussed that with our parents. I don't know about you, but a lot of what we call the *Issei*, our parents generation, came over thinking that this was the land of opportunity, which I think it was, compared to where they were from, and maybe they came over to make a small fortune and go back. That's what my uncle did, my wife's sister did. They went back to Japan. That's how we moved to Reno. But our parents never indicated that they were going to ever move back, and I don't think my father-in-law ever thought of it. I think he missed it.

E: They never talked that much about their childhood, about their life, but I am sure they did come over thinking they'd go back some day.

*Do you know if that's why your parents left Japan?*

E: Yes, probably. I think there were a lot of families that did that, left their kids, and were going to send for them or bring them here or go back to them. It didn't work out that way. [laughter] It wasn't as easy making a living, so they weren't able to afford it. So they never did. It was funny, they never speak

about how sad they are, or how their life was before in Japan. They were very quiet about that. We never asked them.

*Are there any relatives of your parents here?*

You are talking about my parents and their relatives? Well, on my father's side there were eight children, four boys and four girls. The youngest boy stayed in Japan. Most of them were in Hawaii. Over here on the mainland, there was my dad's brother in Stockton, and his sister was in Woodland. They are all gone now. So there were three over on the mainland, four in Honolulu or in that area, and one stayed in Japan to look after the property, I guess. [laughter]

E: Didn't your Stockton uncle come here first?

That I can't tell you. I think he came after my dad, because he's younger. You see dad was the oldest in the family. So I think he came later, but not too much later, because when I was growing up I knew the family pretty well.

E: It's too bad we didn't ask our parents a lot of things. Today we wish we had.

You see, on my mother's side, this one sister was here. Now, when she came over, I don't know. So she and her husband had the laundry here. There were others. I don't know when my other aunt came over on my mother's side. In fact, we don't have much information, except we know them. [laughter]

*Did you guys keep contact, like writing letters?*

After they left here, we lost contact. Soon after they left, my mother passed away. My

mother passed away in 1943, so she is the one that would have been writing to her sisters.

*What about on your father's side?*

Father's side, there were cousins in Hawaii, but we've lost touch with the relatives in Japan.

E: Grandpa went a couple of times to visit in Japan.

Yes, but he's buried up here—both mother and dad are. It depends on when they passed away, too.

E: But he kept in touch with the ones here—his sister and brother.

Well, even in Hawaii. He went to Hawaii several times—with two sisters and a brother in Hawaii. He had a lot of relatives there. Well, it's our relatives, too. So he stayed in touch with them, but we don't. I mean, we've slowly come apart. Some cousins we were in touch with.

*Could you tell me about how your parents' social life, and also your generation's social life in Nevada, in a small community?*

How was our social life?

*In a small community including Caucasians and Mexicans and Italians, all those people, how and what kind of communications or problems you had?*

Well, naturally, we don't have problems with those whom we call friends. Otherwise, we wouldn't be friends. We haven't felt too much in the way of discrimination. We are fairly well accepted, but we are retired now. At the time we were working, we were part of the



community. We got along well with everyone. Very few people looked down on us for being minorities.

*Did you keep your parents' business after they retired?*

Oh, no.

*So you were different?*

Well, after the war things changed quite a bit, although Nevada wasn't evacuated like California. When I was twenty-three, my mother passed away, and I went into the service. Then my father sold the business to another Japanese family by the name of Okomoto, and they are no longer here. So the business didn't continue in the family.

*Do you remember before World War II, before your father sold the business to the other Japanese family, were there any difficulties keeping the business going in a small community, because some people looked down upon the minorities? If they don't come, why, they just spread bad rumors in the neighborhoods, and those people don't come to the business, either?*

Gee, I can't answer that too well. My folks' business was well accepted here. They knew it was being run by Japanese nationals. The owners were Japanese nationals, but up until I went into the service, and Dad sold the place, there wasn't much discrimination. I'm sure some people quit becoming customers, because of the nationality background, but it wasn't so bad that you could feel it. So in this small community I don't know if things like that happened as much as in other places, like in California. So I didn't feel like my dad was a monstrous sight after the war started, because they know you, and as long as you had built

up a good character they didn't do too much against us.

*What about in school?*

E: Well, I guess I was still in school, but I didn't feel anything there. He was in college.

*So nobody changed attitude towards you?*

E: Not knowingly. I mean, it didn't show.

Oh, I'm sure there was some that didn't like us, but they didn't make it so obvious that it made you uncomfortable. Sure, once in a while somebody would call you by a derogatory name, but it didn't happen that often. This was a big community then. We had friends and all, and we'd do things together. So you might say we were very well assimilated in this community. Maybe not one hundred percent, but we were very happy with our treatment.

*What kind of social life did women have, back before World War II, I guess, your parents' generation? Your mother often went out to community activities?*

My mother was quiet, and like any family, when you had a business back in those days, the family generally all worked a certain amount of time. She liked my dad to go to Japan, and my dad went to Hawaii several times to visit relatives. My mother was always concerned about us and running the business, looking after the business, so she would let him go. So she was kind of to herself quite a bit. Well, not to herself—she was with us—but she didn't enjoy going out. Maybe she did, but she never expressed that she wanted to be out. When Admiral Byrd's plane came in, I took her up for her first airplane ride down here.

That was years ago. The *Issei* or *Nisei*—there were quite a few here, because her parents and other families were here—they would get together for social get-togethers every so often, but not once a month, or not that often. So if you want to know if they took part in some of the activities here, not too much. The *Isseis* themselves would get together, but not with Caucasians or activities that involved their friends' races.

*You came here in 1935?*

I was in high school.

*A high school student from California, where you were surrounded by a lot of Japanese people. What kind of friends did you have when you came to Nevada, which did not have a lot of Japanese population?*

Well, in the beginning, you don't have any friends, but I was more fortunate than my sisters, because I was in school. They were out of school. See, I'm the youngest. So once you start going to school, you start making friends, and so that turned out well. I had good friends, and I had casual friends. Oh, I missed the friends in Stockton, because we were in kind of a Japanese-type thing. I missed them, but then you make friends here, and before you know it, you settle down here. You miss the others, but they're good for visits now. But you make your own friends here. From that standpoint, I think they accepted me, and maybe it's because there weren't that many Orientals here, either. There were just a few in school.

*What kind of career did you develop after you graduated from school?*

I went to the University of Nevada three years; I didn't graduate, because I was in the

service. When I came back, I went to work for the county, and in 1958 I was made Washoe County Engineer. Then, let's see, 1967, I became Public Works Director for Washoe County. So I retired from the county.

*Did you choose that career based on your interest?*

I always wanted to be an engineer, so I was taking engineering up at Nevada. Then, after I came out of the service, the semester had already started, so I was employed by the county, and I have stayed with them ever since, with the county engineering department. After I got registered as a professional engineer, then the county engineer left, so they appointed me as county engineer. So I was very fortunate. I was with the county thirty-three years, and then I retired.

*What about Eunice?*

Well, during the war, she was a nurse's aid. She volunteered, because she didn't want to go into the service like we do today. Then, after I got out, we were married in the latter part of 1946, and then, when we got the children I said, "You've got to look after the children." So she quit working to raise the children. So after that, of course, she was employed in various places, but she was more like a housewife. Maybe that's part of the Japanese tradition. You raise the children. The mothers raise the children.

*So you asked Eunice to stay home, knowing that was more Japanese tradition than American?*

I think in those days, it was also traditional for an American family; the wives didn't work. The man was the breadwinner and worked, and the wife took care of the house and the

children. So maybe that part is similar. Now, in Japan the women are assigned to look for work, but in the past they would always stay at home, and the husbands got to be out and around. So it's changing there. So that's all I hear, as soon as we start to get children. Well, that's my philosophy anyway: somebody should raise them. When they come home from school, go to school—she took care of all of that. She has PTA work, Parents Teachers Association. She was good that way. She's a good mother.

*So she was active in PTA. Do any of your relatives work in a regular company?*

No.

*Well, could you tell what kind of jobs they have?*

Well, my uncle in Stockton had a fish market, and after graduation he went back to Stockton, and he had a little shop in a grocery store, in the back—well, the fish area. So he stayed with that until he passed away. My aunt was married to a man that was in ranching; they would lease a ranch and work that. Now, I can't tell you what my aunt and uncle did in Hawaii. I don't know what they did.

*What about your brothers and sisters?*

I don't have any brothers, just three sisters. The oldest one was married to a man that was, for several years, in charge of the language school at Monterey. He was a director at one time. One sister, after World War II, tried various things and then went to work for the post office and retired. She was a part-time bookkeeper. She was hired as a part-time bookkeeper. One sister is a full-time bookkeeper. She's still working. She was divorced years ago, I think, but she's

doing well. So that's all I can tell you about my family.

Now, Eunice's two brothers that lived here are both gone. One sister is still living here, but she's retired. She had a flower shop. First she had a beauty shop, and when she got married she and her husband went into the flower business and did well, but he's gone. He passed away. She's retired. I don't know what else to tell you, because I don't know too much about the other relatives. [laughter] I have a cousin in Hawaii that does well in insurance, but I don't know what each individual did. Most of them are now retired, of course. [laughter]

*Could you tell me what kind of living conditions your parents had in Nevada, when you first came here?*

Well, until he got established here, even though he took over a laundry that was a going business . . . . We finally bought a home, and so we all grew up there. Eunice's dad was a farmer, and he had about ten acres, so they lived in what you'd call a ranch-stock family. None of us are really what you'd call rich, but we weren't starving either. But we had to work hard, to a certain extent. So living conditions, I'd say, well, average; maybe it could be below average, because we weren't wealthy.

*Did you have to help your parents often after school?*

No. Now, I can't speak for Eunice's side of the family, but we didn't have to help. Maybe I stayed out and worked, so I could save some money when I was going up at the university—not high school, but the university. But I worked in the laundry, and I'd go back to school. I went back to school after one year. So we helped, but not so that

we could keep a business going, or anything. My folks had other workers there. If I wanted to stay out a year and work, it was OK, you know. [laughter] But if I went some place else to work, it wouldn't have hurt the family any, if that's what you mean—did we work to help the family?

*Yes. I just interviewed a Mr. Buddy Fujii.*

Yes.

*He said he always helped his father with the gardening business. Was your father's business a kind of family business?*

Well, he had about six employees working, and then my mother worked, and my sister helped. But it's not helping; there were salaries. They were working for my dad and mother. One sister moved to San Francisco; it didn't matter, because the family business was doing well, so we didn't have to pitch in. Now in the beginning, though, well, like Buddy and his brother, I think they all pitched in, to make sure that they had a nursery. And in their spare time—I guess, when you grow things you can help anytime, and it's welcome help—so much to do.

*Do you know what kind of people were hired by your parents to work in the business?*

Well, they were mostly Japanese and one Filipino. And he went back to the Philippines. But they were all Japanese *Issei*. See my mother's two sisters . . . one owned it, and she and her husband worked in the laundry. But they were gone after my folks took over, because both my mother's two sisters and their husbands went back to Japan. But there was a few Japanese here that worked there for years. I don't know where they are now.

They're probably gone, because they were *Isseis*. They were Japanese nationals, because at that time they couldn't be citizens, anyway.

*So your parents died here without having any citizenship?*

Oh, my father did. See, my mother passed away first. After the war, they changed the immigration laws, so you could become naturalized. So my dad went to school and got naturalized.

*Could you tell me about school life, not in college, but in high school and junior high? What kind of life style did you have in school?*

Well, I don't know what you mean by life style.

*Well, what did you do in school, or after school? What did you do with your friends? What kind of friends did you hang around with, and what kind of topics did you guys talk about all the time?*

Well, I assume that we lived a normal high school life, went to football games. I was on the rifle team. I was never in any sports activities; I wasn't big enough. We all used to get together—a group of kids that got to be my friends. I joined the DeMolays—that's the beginning of becoming a Mason—except I didn't become a Mason, because I was in the service, and my interests fell away. But a DeMolay was a junior group, and my friends were there, and they asked me to join, which I did. So, I don't know that we went to any dances, because, well, for one thing, I knew more boys than girls in school. So maybe the school activities didn't do too much, but I don't think I missed out on anything, because I made some pretty good friends in school.

*I have a question. Your wife is Japanese, and among second generation Japanese Americans, there are very few people who got married to Caucasians or different race people. Did you think about marrying a person of a different race when you were young?*

No, I didn't.

*Did you want to marry a Japanese, or did you think you had to?*

Well, it never occurred to me to not marry a person of the same race. Well, similar to what I mentioned about school dances, her older sister was in my same class. The only time I asked her out was to go to the senior prom, because I couldn't ask. Well, I didn't know enough other girls to ask. Maybe they wouldn't even go with me then. I don't know. I never tried, so I can't tell you, but I would say that being raised in Stockton, where there were a lot of Japanese, a lot of boys and girls my age, that it never occurred to me to try to ask, well, let's say, a Caucasian girl to go to the movies or anything. Never occurred to me. Today, things like that are maybe more difficult for youngsters now, but it didn't bother me. I missed friends when they would talk about a dance coming up, and I knew I was not going to go. In a way, you adjust, but it never made an impression on me. That's why I can't talk to you about it, because it wasn't that big a thing, not so important that I am angry, or not angry, or whatever. It didn't affect me at all. I can't speak for all the others. [laughter]

*Could you tell me if, after your mother died, your father's life style changed?*

Well, a fortunate thing, I think, is that the Japanese that were here—there weren't that many—were always getting together after

there was no business to be concerned about and everything. They're all about the same age and not working for a living any more, that is, no daily work, nothing to keep them down, so they got interested in this singing, and so they traveled to California and to the different communities where they had conventions or get-togethers. They got together here almost about once a month or so, had dinner at one place, or they'd take turns. So I think they kind of enjoyed themselves. At least that's the impression I have, that they did enjoy getting together every so often. My dad liked fishing, so he'd go fishing. So I think, overall, their twilight years were kind of nice. And then the grandkids would come along, and so he would enjoy the grandchildren. I think he treated them better than he treated me, maybe. [laughter] As long as the family stayed together, I think they enjoyed it. And the friends enjoyed it. The friends, of course, started to pass away, but those that were living would get together, and I think it was entertaining for them. Now, I can't tell you too much, but like my dad and my wife's dad, I know they practiced. They really enjoyed that singing. I can't say they were real good singers, but I think the community here was pretty nice for them. Maybe they missed not seeing a lot of Japanese, but they never said that they were lonely.

*Well, that was my last question.*

Well, I hope somebody has a little insight in that this area was not bad. I think the community treated the Japanese very well, over all.

*I got the impression from you that it was.*

Yes, I think so.

*Thank you very much.*

Oh, you're welcome.





## IDA FUKUI WEISS

*Noriko Kunitomi: Today, November 9, 1992, I'm interviewing Mrs. Ida Weiss at her house in Reno, Nevada. The interview will be about Japanese people in Nevada who came to the United States before World War II. The Oral History Program of the University of Nevada has your consent to make available to the public the tapes and transcripts of the interview we do here today?*

Ida Fukui Weiss: Yes.

*Thank you. I want to start with general information. Your parents are the first generation who came to the United States?*

Yes.

*Do you know which part of Japan they came from?*

They're from Wakayama, Japan.

*Did they get married before they came to the States?*

Yes.

*Do you know why they came to the United States?*

Probably, to seek a better life, because Japan was very poor in those days.

*Do you know when they came here?*

My mother came to this country in 1910; my father probably came a little earlier, but I don't know when.

*Do you know how they came? Did they know somebody in this country already?*

They probably did. I don't know.

*After they came to the United States, did they keep some kind of contact with relatives in Japan?*

Oh, yes. I still do.

*Oh, I see. Do you understand, or do you read Japanese?*

No. I have to take my letters to somebody to have them read them, but when I write, I write in English, because I'm sure they take theirs to somebody to have them read, too.

*I see. Do you have any cousins or relatives in this country?*

Yes. I have a brother. He came yesterday to see me. I have a cousin in California, several in fact. I have a cousin here in Nevada, out at Lovelock.

*Your father's or mother's?*

Both. My father's cousin is from Lovelock, and my mother's cousin lives in California.

*Do you know if either of your parents' brothers and sisters came to the United States?*

I don't know.

*Did your parents come to Nevada straight from Japan?*

Yes.

*They didn't stay in California at all?*

They may have, but I'm not sure.

*What kind of jobs or careers did your parents have in Nevada?*

Well, my father had a laundry, because everybody—the Oriental people—all had laundries and dry cleaning places.

*In Reno?*

No, in Carson City. My brother still lives in Carson City. I was born and raised in Carson City.

*I see. Could you tell me a little bit about Carson City when you were young?*

Well, it was a very small city; it only had about three thousand people there. We were the only Japanese people there, and I guess, in those days, there was some prejudice, but we made some really good friends that were influential and are well known now. Some of them I have kept my good friends and they have helped me. My attorney is somebody that I knew from my teenage years, and he has been very helpful and very kind to me. We still keep up a good relationship, but other people have more or less scattered, gone.

*You just mentioned prejudice; did you have difficulty?*

Not that I can really say, but during the war was very hard, even though my brother was in the United States Army. It was hard, because nobody wanted to give me a job, but there was a man that did give me a job, and I worked for him for about ten years. Then I passed the civil service test, and I went to work for the Veterans Administration Hospital here. Even then, some people did not want to hire me, even though you have the qualifications, you've passed the test and all that, but I managed to work myself up to where I was a supervisor when I left. I found out that if you're Japanese, you have to work a little harder or be a little bit smarter than the next guy.

*What kind of education did you get?*

I went to high school, and then I went to business college. I didn't go to college like you are going.

*Where was the business college?*

San Francisco and Reno.

*At the time you graduated from business school, your parents still had their business in Carson City?*

Yes.

*You did not want to take your father's position after he retired?*

Well, no, because my father had to give up his laundry business when my brother went into the army. There was just my brother and myself. My brother went into the army. We gave our business to my cousins from California, because they had to evacuate from California. You've heard of the evacuation? So they had to move out of California, so they came and took over the laundry and cleaners. Then we moved to Reno.

*So after you moved to Reno, your parents started a new business?*

No, no. My parents retired. They didn't work any more. I went to work, and then I worked for this one person for ten years and then went to work for the Veterans Administration.

*Did you go to a different school for that to study?*

No, I worked in administration; I didn't work as a nurse or anything like that. When you work for the government, there's lots and lots of paper work. So there's a lot of people pushing pencils over there.

*I don't know how much you remember, but could you tell me about your parent's social life when they were living in Carson City?*

Well, we would go to different towns close by, where there were Japanese; they just mixed with the Japanese. In some of your other interviews you probably learned that. Even Nisei, during the war we were very close. Now, we don't even see each other hardly, anymore. I haven't seen Mr. Ayoama in two years, I don't think. We don't see each other. He's a very interesting man.

*So your parents and you and your brother did not really intermingle with different racial . . . ?*

Yes, we did. I am married to a Caucasian. [laughter] How much integration can you get? [laughter]

*Could you give me examples of what kind of activities you guys had in your community?*

Well, we used to go bowling, and go to picnics and wienie roasts, and the kind of thing, maybe, you do in school.

*But what about during the war time?*

That's the kind of things we did, picnics, wienie roasts, bowling, potluck dinners. You've heard of JACL [Japanese-American Citizens League]?

Yes.

That's how JACL got started. It was in 1949, I think, that it got started, because I had a friend that worked for JACL in San Francisco. That fellow, Joe Marsoaka, came to Reno, because he was pushing the senator from Nevada, McCarran—trying to lobby him into passing the law where the Japanese could become citizens. That's how he came to Reno, and he stayed at our home, the Fukui house, and then decided to form a JACL here.

That's how it started in 1949. Then, of course, that law did pass, and the citizens—the *Issei*—could become citizens, but before that, they couldn't become citizens, and lots of people would say, "Your parents have lived here a long time. If they liked it so much, why didn't they become citizens?" They couldn't until after the war. That's how it started, Senator Walters from Nebraska, I think, with Senator McCarran. Do you know that one? In your interviews nobody mentioned JACL?

*Well, JACL—they didn't really say why.*

Well, that's how it got started.

*What kind of things did you guys do with the non-Japanese? Your family was probably the only Japanese family in Carson City, so you guys had to have different ethnic people as neighbors.*

Yes, Caucasians.

*What did you guys do with them socially?*

Same things; played cards or something like that.

*Did they change attitudes towards you guys when the war started?*

Oh, yes. You're too young to know about the war. It was very hard on the Japanese. My mother would say, "If we hadn't come to this country, we would not be subjecting our children to all of this."

But I still felt that this country was better. Being in Japan, you get bombed and all that, and they got burned out. This way, we were still sort of restricted. We couldn't leave and go some place without approval. You couldn't move around as freely, but there were people

in Carson that I grew up with that were very kind, and they would sign, saying, "We will vouch for this person. They can go to Reno or wherever." But I made some very good friends. I don't think you ever heard of Paul Laxalt; he was the governor of Nevada, and he became a senator. Well, we went to school about the same time, and he still remembered me. I ran into him in Reno and he remembered me after all those years. And, as I say, my attorney, Clark Guild, is very prominent in Reno, and we are still good friends. I met my husband at the V.A., because he worked in finance, and I worked in another department.

My mother was of the old, old world; not like you young people. She didn't believe in inter-marriage. And so I took care of my mother; that's the Japanese custom, too. You don't stick them in a nursing home. She didn't speak the language, anyway. So what can you do? So my husband and I, we went together for fourteen years, because my mother didn't believe in mixed marriages. After my mother died, we waited six months or so, and then we got married, but we've been married twenty-two years come June. That's a long time, especially the way marriages are these days, and we get along fine.

*So your mother could not speak English at all, even though she lived in this country?*

No, not very well.

*How could you communicate with her?*

Oh, I spoke Japanese.

*Oh, I see.*

I can't speak it now, but when my mother was living we spoke Japanese. She was ninety-three when she died.

*It's interesting to hear, because I interviewed six more Japanese people before our interview now, and they spoke very little Japanese, even when they were young. When they were young they, of course, understood what their parents said, but they did not speak Japanese.*

Oh, no. I spoke Japanese.

*So your parents did not try to make the children American? They tried to keep the Japanese heritage more?*

Oh, yes. I still refer back to our culture and our heritage a lot. My mother used to have a lot of sayings that she used to tell me. Like, one of the things that I think is very missing these days is *giri* (obligation).

*Giri?*

Yes. In English, you would say, "Is that gratitude?" *Enryo* (hesitate or abstain)—people don't *enryo* any more. A lot of those things my mother used to teach me.

*So are you Buddhist?*

No, my mother was Buddhist. Of course, my mother and father were Buddhist. I do have a shrine in the back that I keep.

Yes.

I put my parent's pictures in there. I probably would have been Buddhist, if I had grown up in a community that was Buddhist, but we were the only Japanese people, and so the people would come and take us to church and then I became a Christian. I still go to Christian church.

When I die, I don't want all those things that I saved to end up in a garage sale. They

call them *Kai-myō* (sacred papers). So I got in contact with a Buddhist priest that I had known. I talked it over with my older relatives, and so I wrote to Japan and I asked them if I could send the *Kai-myō*, all those things, to the church, the Buddhist Temple in Japan, as a permanent place. They said yes. They talked to the Buddhist priest who said yes. But everything requires money. They don't say you pay for it; it's sort like an offering or something like a donation. So I asked my relatives in Japan how much do they think I should give to the church? They told me, and the money was a little higher than it is now, but they told me it amounted to four thousand dollars.

*Wow!*

But I sent that four thousand dollars, and I sent all of the sacred papers. I made a duplicate, and I still keep the duplicate here, but I sent the original things to Japan. So I went into the Japanese Temple where my relatives go. And then I put a note in the *Hotoki-san* (portable shrine) saying that when I die, that this goes to a Buddhist church, and they asked that that *Hotoki-san* goes to a Buddhist family. It's too sacred to end up in a garage sale someplace, and I don't want those things, like the *Kai-myō*, to be just thrown out, because *Hotoki-san* doesn't mean anything to them. So I did that a couple of years ago, and I feel better for it.

*I see. So what are they going to do with the duplicates?*

Well, the duplicates can go to our church here, or the Buddhist church in California some place.

*But you didn't think about giving the originals to the church in California?*

No, I wanted the originals to go to Japan. I'm paying four thousand dollars; I think the originals should go. [laughter]

*I see. Did your parents expect you to do all that, or just because you want to?*

No, I wanted to. No, my parents never said anything like that. They probably didn't even think about anything like that, but I wanted to do that. None of my relatives even suggested it; I just thought that it would be right. Those are the things that I think are instilled in me from my mother.

*Were there a lot of conflicts between being a Japanese, rejecting the Japanese heritage, and Christianity?*

No, no. My mother used to go to Christian church with me. She would sit and pray in her own way, but she would sit, especially during the war, because my brother was overseas. The values of this country have deteriorated so. Like, for example, I resent the fact that my brother went to the service, went into the army, and endured all the hardships, and he went through hard fighting in Europe, and yet we have a president now that didn't even go into the service, and used his influence to get out of it, and he can still be commander in chief. I resent that. I think that's terrible, because out of respect for all of the Japanese people that went and fought and died for this country, somebody like that can become president. My husband feels the same way. He was in the service in Korea. But, of course, you know Clinton won. The values are terrible. The morality is terrible these days, too.

I had my friend make this flower arrangement. I'm going to put it in front of the *Hotoki-san*. My aunt, who is in her nineties, every time she comes, because she's Buddhist,

she always brings me some flowers to put in front of the *Hotoki-san*. And I'm not very good at this arrangement, so I used to just put them there. But I had this arrangement made to put in front of the Buddhist shrine. Not many people are Buddhists around here, are they?

*I think none of them say they are Buddhist, and they didn't have a shrine.*

Christian relationship? I know I've never heard of anybody going to church. But I contribute to church. Every month I make a pledge.

*Do you have children?*

No, no. My husband has a son. Between the two of us we don't have children.

*So that means you are not going to expect anybody to keep you, put you in that kind of assisted living home?*

No, that's why I made all these arrangements, so that the *Kai-myō* and things would go to Japan, the Buddhist shrine would go to a Buddhist church in California, and all those things, because I am not Buddhist, and they don't know anything about those things. That's why I say I don't want any of them in a garage sale.

*What about your husband? Your husband understands Japanese culture?*

More or less; not deeply, but he has very high morals, and he's a very quiet, good person. He's a Mason, and in Japan they have Masons.

*I don't really understand the meaning of a Mason.*



It's all over the world, but they believe in God.

*I want to go back to that question of your social life. Since your mother was Japanese, and she could not communicate very well in English, except for communicating with Japanese people near Carson City, what kind of a social life did she have?*

Not very much, I don't think.

*She stayed home?*

All day they worked hard, so afterwards she didn't have much time for socializing, but they worked hard. I remember my mother talking about how they'd get up at four o'clock in the morning and work hard. Japanese people, most of them, are used to working hard.

I have two nieces—my cousin just died in July—his children. They're really my cousins. He was a *Nisei*. He had them working in the cleaners during the summer time. They were hard workers, so when they went to school at University of Nevada, Reno, they always studied hard. You probably do, too. But this one girl, I think she took accounting, but one of the subjects she took was logistics. I understand that's hard, but it looks good on a resume. So she went to one of these job fairs, and she got hired right away with just one interview. Now she has a very good job, and she does very well, because she went to South Carolina, and the cost of living is not like Reno, so she's doing very well. But they were hard workers.

*So your father passed away, what year?*

Oh, yes. In 1956, so it's a long time ago.

*Because of disease, or what?*

He had a ruptured appendix, and it became peritonitis. You know, once disease spreads after a ruptured appendix . . . well, then that's how he died. My mother was old; she died of congenital heart disease; old age, really.

*Yes, ninety-three. So after your father had passed away, your mother . . . ?*

The two of us lived. My brother was married and gone, so it was just the two of us.

*Did she make something like, you know, traditionally Japanese arts or crafts?*

No. But she was a good cook, Japanese food. I miss Japanese food; do you?

*Well, I cook some.*

Do you?

Yes.

So I have to go to a Japanese restaurant once in a while with my friends.

*But you know how to cook Japanese food?*

No.

*You did not learn from your mother?*

No, but I wished I had, because my mother used to make good Japanese dishes. And the New Year's, oh, she used to cook all kinds of delicious Japanese dishes. I miss Japanese New Year's. Some of my American friends would come, and they got so they cultivated a taste. When I was working at the hospital I got to be good friends with a doctor. I used to talk about *sashimi* (raw tuna fish), and he said,

"Don't eat *sashimi*. You get worms and this and that, heavens!"

But when they came over here for New Year's, and my mother would have *sashimi*, he acquired a taste for it. He used to go to the fish market at Mary Date's Fish Market, and he used to sit in the back room and eat the *sashimi*. [laughter] I said, "I thought you said it was not good for you."

"Well, I don't know, but isn't it good?"

*Yes, but I can't get any fresh meat here. I don't eat sashimi.*

When I go to a restaurant I order it. If you're going to get sick, you're going to get sick, so I eat it!

*I have a couple of more questions. Are there any of your relatives here or in California who have jobs relating to the railroad?*

No.

*None of them?*

No.

*I just heard a lot of people who are Japanese in Nevada came here to get jobs in the railroad company.*

There was a family here, but I don't know. Did you hear about the Nishiguchis? He was in the railroad, but I don't know whether anybody's here or not. Oh, I guess some of them are, but you can ask about that. They are all married to Caucasians now, I think. But an interesting thing, a lot of Asians worked in the railroad and mines. So up at Virginia City, if you read up on Virginia City, there were a lot of Asians up there, and that cemetery is famous, but do you know, there's no Asian

cemetery, Chinese cemetery? It was plowed under.

*Oh, really?*

Yes. A friend of mine—we used to go up there and go through the cemetery, and then there were some historians from the Nevada Historical Society, and I mentioned it. Somebody wrote a book or something about it, and I called that person, and they said, "No Asian cemetery." You know, they used to have to bury them separate, because of the discrimination. They said that there was vandalism there, and so they plowed it under. Now, if plowing it under—if that's not vandalism, I don't know what is.

*I can't see any Asian graveyards there?*

Some up there. There's a few in Carson.

*I heard a Japanese came to Reno, and he was the first person that came to this country in 1867. He is buried in the Mountain View Cemetery. I think people who grew up in Reno or came to live in Reno before World War II and went through their difficulty in Reno had a more easy life than I heard from you in Carson City.*

Oh, I think everybody had the same. That's why we all stuck together. Now, we don't need each other, but that's the way people are, unless you're true friends.

*So, do you sometimes go to JACL meetings?*

No, I don't go to JACL anymore, even though it started in our house. I don't go any more, because they're all different people; they're younger people, but we worked hard to get this law passed. Remember when they got

the twenty thousand, because of evacuations? Well, it didn't concern me. I didn't go to an evacuation camp. I was born and raised here. So I didn't go very much, and then I lost interest, being married to a Caucasian and all that. I don't go.

*So you don't keep any Japanese customs here in this house?*

I don't think so. I can't think of anything. I have some Japanese artifacts, like I have dolls and my mother's dishes, and things like that, but aside from that, we don't. I've forgotten so many things; it's too bad. I know a Japanese custom: when you go someplace, you take a present. I've forgotten all about that. [laughter] I don't do anything. I don't do that any more.

*I think that's OK in this country.*

Well, some of the old people still do, like my aunt; she brings flowers for the shrine, but I forget those things, and I am ashamed of myself, because some of them still do, bring things. When I go to see them, I think, "Oh, I should have taken something."

*Your parents were not carpenters, so they did not make any special house for you?*

No. My parents had a building where they had the laundry, and the laundry was on this side, and we lived in the other half.

*When I come into my room, I still take my shoes off right away.*

Oh, do you?

*Yes. I am comfortable to do it. Why, did your parents leave theirs on?*

Did we do that? No. Did your roommates laugh?

*Well, yes. They just wonder why I am doing it. [laughter] I am so used to just taking my shoes off and putting my feet out to relax.*

No, we don't do that. My brother and his wife are very neat and clean and tidy, and all that stuff. He vacuums all the time. My husband and I are just the opposite. We get along great.

*Did your father sing songs?*

Yes, yes.

*Yes, I heard about it. I was wondering, did they keep the shigen (Japanese-style singing) on paper?*

No, I don't think so.

*Or did they write it down?*

I don't know.



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